AMERICAN MASTERS OF PAINTING

CHARLES H. CAFFIN

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From the collection of **Mrs. Augustus Saint-Gaudens.**

HOMER SAINT-GAUDENS.

By John S. Sargent.

AMERICAN MASTERS OF PAINTING

BEING

BRIEF APPRECIATIONS OF SOME AMERICAN PAINTERS

ILLUSTRATED WITH EXAMPLES OF THEIR WORK

BY

CHARLES H. CAFFIN

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I

GEORGE INNESS

I

GEORGE INNESS

IN the record of American art three names stand out distinctly as those of innovators: Whistler, La Farge, and George Inness. While Whistler's influence has been felt throughout the whole art world, and La Farge (to quote from the Report of the International Jury of the Exhibition of 1889) "has created in all its details an art unknown before," Inness was a pathfinder, only within the domain of American art, and was led by instinct into ways already trodden by the great men of other countries. But this does not make him less an innovator. Nor does the fact that he was certainly influenced by "the men of 1830," when he came to know their works. The point is that throughout his life his evolution was from within.

His father, a retired New York grocer, would have had him enter business, and even opened a small store for him in Newark, N.J., whither the family had moved from Newburg. But the son's mind was set on art. Like Durand, Kensett, and

Casilear, he was apprenticed for a short time to an engraver, and subsequently studied painting for a little while with Regis Gignoux, a pupil of Delaroche. For the rest he was self-taught. His contemporary, Frederick E. Church, younger than himself by a year, was seeking instruction from Thomas Cole, the founder of the "Hudson River School," whose grand topographical landscapes the pupil was to follow in his studies of the Andes, of Niagara, and of other impressive regions. The young Inness, meanwhile, was independently studying the individual forms of nature. That he should be insensible to the influence of Cole was out of the question, and so late as 1865, when he was forty years old, and had returned from his first visit to Europe deeply impressed with the work of the Barbizon painters, we can detect in at least two pictures, "Delaware Valley" and the large "Peace and Plenty" of the Metropolitan Museum, that fondness for grandeur of distance and extent so characteristic of Cole. But we can also detect the expression of a fuller intimacy with the scene than Cole could give. Inness's own penetrating study of natural phenomena, indorsed for himself, no doubt, by the corresponding aim of the Barbizon painters to reach the inwardness of the landscape, had enabled him more thoroughly to comprehend the vastness; to collate

From the collection of George A. Hearn, Esq.

THE BERKSHIRE HILLS.

By George Inness.

the details and render them subordinate to a single powerful impression. The conception and progress of each of those pictures is from the general to the particular, and not contrariwise, as in the topographical landscape; and this contrary has impressed upon them a distinct personal feeling; the realization in each case of a mood of nature, powerfully felt.

But in alluding to the topographical character of Cole's landscapes, I am very far from wishing to belittle the essential greatness of that painter. While his means of expression were comparatively inadequate, while he may even have mistaken the true province of landscape painting, his conception of nature was unquestionably an exalted one, and likely to be acceptable to a spirit so eagerly aspiring as Inness's. Moreover — and this is often overlooked — it was the natural result of the time and environment. To a young people, with its growing consciousness of free and independent nationality, surrounded by the vastness of nature as yet scarcely altered by man, what could have been more attractive than this sense of nature's grandeur? In their attitude toward the nature around them they may have been nearer to the truth than we give them credit for. We must not forget that our estimate of the functions of landscape painting comes to us from Holland, a

country of limited horizons, through France, whose soil is highly cultivated and studded with the charming intimacy of rural life. Finding this *paysage intime* true to nature and intrinsically lovely, while the so-called classic landscape was grandiloquently superficial, we have assumed that the former is the true and only satisfactory representative of pictorial landscape. Perhaps too rashly; for even as painting has been able to compass the solemnities of religion, so a painter may arise who will join to technical ability sufficient force of mind to compass the solemnities of nature. Meanwhile, we should at least remember that Cole drew his inspiration from American scenery, which the modern painter is studying through spectacles borrowed from France and Holland.

Where Inness showed himself superior to the American painters of his early life was in the comprehensive control which he exercised over his view of nature; a control assisted by his close study of nature's forms, and of their relative significances. He was, in fact, the father of the naturalistic movement in American landscape; for it seems clear that he fully realized the trend of his studies before he had found them indorsed by the Barbizon painters. And this separate and independent offshoot of the naturalistic movement,

appearing almost simultaneously in the New World, is a very curious and interesting problem. In the case of the Barbizon painters the logic of the movement can be readily traced: in the general dissatisfaction with classicism; in the immediate influence of Constable and the tradition of the Dutch; and, finally, in a sort of compromise between the realism of Courbet and the poetic rage of the Romanticists. But that, unprompted by outside suggestion, a yearning for nature study and for a poetic interpretation of landscape should have arisen at about the same time in a young man on the banks of the American Hudson, points to that wider logic which thinkers have detected in the evolution of man — that the identical phases of evolution may appear sporadically, independent of transmitted causes, the individual man or nation having reached a period of personal development at which the next step becomes inevitable.

Inness was of religious temperament; highly imaginative and at the same time questioning, argumentative, as befitted his Scotch origin. Applying these qualities to his art, he was unremitting in the investigation of truth, while regarding nature in a spirit of elevated poetry. For he seems to have had always an alert consciousness of the simultaneous claims of the spirit and of the senses. He found an interdependence between the two.

External beauty was the expression of an inward beauty of spirit. In this way landscape painting to some orders of mind becomes veritably a form of religious painting. It would seem to have been so to Inness, as, in his way, it was to Corot. It was with the latter of all the Barbizon painters that Inness appears to have had most sympathy, though he was appreciative also of Rousseau and Daubigny.

A man may be gauged to some extent by the company he chooses, and Inness's predilection for these three may afford additional evidence of his own personal feeling toward his art. Toward Rousseau he was attracted, no doubt, by the master's magnificent sincerity, the tireless analysis that resulted in such a comprehension of nature's forms, within which he, too, felt the existence of a spirituality that led him in time to nature-worship, into a sort of vague pantheism. This spiritual "underlay" in Rousseau's work must have been very fascinating to Inness, while its concentrated intensity would strike a sympathetic chord in his own ardent temperament. Not, however, so as to lead him in the direction of Rousseau's sternness. His sympathies were more akin to the tender spirituality of Corot. He missed in the latter's work the mastery of tangible form and found his range of colour narrow, but was charmed with

From the collection of William T. Evans, Esq.

SUNSHINE AND CLOUDS.

By George Inness.

the exquisite serenity, childlike freshness of soul, and perpetually gracious *bonhommie* of Corot's manner, — all qualities that one associates with the classic style, and that make the introduction of nymphs into his naturalistic landscapes seem altogether reasonable.

And in this predilection for Corot there is interest, since we are accustomed to hear Inness called "an impetuous and passionate painter." Yet in his work there is very little of stress and storm. We remember him most affectionately, and seem to find him most characteristically represented in works of such benign repose as "Winter Morning, Montclair," "The Wood Gatherers," "The Clouded Sun," and "Summer Silence." I do not forget that many of his earlier pictures could be described as passionate; but their turbulence of emotion is seldom associated with any disturbance in nature. The turbulence is in the manner of feeling and painting rather than in the subject, in the interpretation, for example, of a flaming sunset sky over an earth sinking peacefully to slumber. The passion is in the painter himself; and, as he matured, ardour yielded to intensity, to the white heat of concentrated energy. The progress of his art was steadily in the direction of serenity, that highest quality of calm which is the flux of passion.

Here again becomes evident the essentially re-

ligious character of his art and its point of contact with the religiosity of Rousseau and Corot; Rousseau's attained through suffering, Corot's preserving to the end the naïve, painless faith of the child. Inness would be drawn to one by sympathy, to the other by wonder and love. Whence, then, his admiration of Daubigny? The latter had little intensity and less spirituality; an easy man, the lockers of whose houseboat contained good creature comforts. He makes you realize the smile of the earth, and limits his poetry to the quiet comfortableness of the inhabited and cultivated banks of his beloved rivers. Partly it was the perennial boyishness of Daubigny's heart that, no doubt, captivated Inness. His own soul was quick and eager to the end, undimmed or worsted up to close on seventy years, and its sweet freshness was a triumph over the debilitating effects of frail health, unremitting toil, and protracted struggle. So the genial, simple lovableness of Daubigny's character may well have brought him encouragement and refreshment. But we may suspect another link of fascination. While Rousseau and Corot were painters of nature, Daubigny was the painter of the country, of the landscape in its intimate relation to the life of man. It is not that he introduces figures, for he seldom does, yet the spirit of mankind broods over almost all his landscapes;

and the normal progress of all of us in our love of nature is apt to be from wonderland to the land of intimate affection. A child will be attracted by a gorgeous sunset, and we most of us begin by admiring nature's grandeur, nor are disinclined to lose ourselves in her infinity. But later comes the more seeing eye, which finds infinite suggestion in little things and a suggestion, also, of infinity, if the mind craves for it. And then comes, too, a craving to be personally something in the midst of this infinity, to attach one's self to one's surroundings and share in the common life; so more and more we grow to value those aspects of nature which recall our intimate relation to her, and the simple landscape of the countryside is found to be most companionable. As soon as his circumstances permitted, Inness established himself in a country home at Montclair, N.J., and thenceforth the simple charms of his surroundings afford him all the inspiration that he needs.

To us as well as to himself this is the most beautiful period of his art, representing the maturity both of his method and ideal. Years of study and experiment have given his hand assurance and facility. It obeys the brain implicitly and with a readiness that does not put any drag upon the full, free play of the imagination. Its ideography is entirely personal, the brush work having

been refined until in the most succinct and pregnant way it expresses precisely its author's point of view. So personal is it that one may with equal certainty deduce the point of view from the method or trace back the method to the point of view. Ampleness and simplicity are the characteristics of each. The ampleness, however, is no longer of space but of significance; the vision, instead of being long-sighted, has become more penetrating and embracing; the artist is more thoroughly possessed of his subject. So, too, the simplicity involves no meagreness of thought, but a thought fully realized and clarified of everything that might detract from or confuse its meaning, having also a large suggestiveness, an expression of the artist's imagination which invites the exercise of ours. At least such is the character of the brush work in his best pictures, for there are others in which the expanses of slightly broken colour, enlivened only by a few accents, are inclined to be a little uninteresting; succinct, in fact, without being also pregnant of meaning. If, however, they seem to be slight and sketchy, it is not because they were done without heart or care, but because Inness was constantly experimenting in the direction of more complete synthesis, wherein form for its own sake is less and less insisted on, and the great motive

aimed at is the character of the scene, and the spirituality which it embodies — a motive, in fact, of interpretive impressionism.

In view of Inness's impressionistic tendency that is a curious statement which has been credited to him, "While pre-Raphaelism is like a measure worm trying to compass the infinite circumference, impressionism is the sloth enveloped in its own eternal dulness." If the remark was really made by him, it proves that he could be intolerant of others without trying to understand their motives. Both movements are naturalistic, and for that reason alone, if for no other, Inness might have tried to understand them; pre-Raphaelism, moreover, added to its devotion to the truth of form a profound spirituality, with which quality, at least, he should have felt some sympathy. Its motive, moreover, was in a measure humble. It certainly never tried to "compass the infinite circumference"; on the contrary, it limited itself to fragments and exaggerated their importance, pictorially speaking, in the general scheme. Even more misjudged is the application of a sloth to the analytical refinement and indefatigable study of the most eminent impressionists. It could not have been their search for the fugitive effects in nature or for the precise character of some phase of nature at a certain time that

annoyed Inness, perhaps hardly the secondary place that they sometimes give to form. More likely it was their choice of a subject without due reference to the accepted conventions of pictorial composition and, I suspect, still more to their disregard of that other pictorial convention, tone. I am using the word "tone" to express the prevalence of some one colour in a picture to which all other hues are subordinated, and not in that other use of the word which involves the setting of all objects, lights, and colours in a picture in due relation to one another, within an *enveloppe* of atmosphere. We have become inclined to regard "tonality" as a fetich, forgetting that it is after all only one of many admirable pictorial conventions, which, like other pictorial conventions, has no absolutely true counterpart in nature. No one can affirm conclusively that any one convention has a prescriptive superiority over all others. It is a matter to be adjusted by the temperament of the individual. In the neighbourhood of the Hudson we have days when the atmosphere is extraordinarily brilliant and the light clear white. I cannot recall any adequate expression of this in Inness's pictures. He was drawn rather to early mornings, to evenings, to quiet afternoons, or the golden glow of summer and autumn, when the atmosphere is caressing.

From the collection of James W. Ellsworth, Esq.

MIDSUMMER.

By George Inness.

Such moods, perhaps, contributed to him more suggestion of spirituality and were more in harmony with the mysticism of his mind.

Not only had he the faculty of seizing the character of a scene and of portraying it in terms of eloquent suggestiveness, but he gave it the impress of his own fine way of seeing it. We remember the effect produced by viewing a large number of his pictures together, as at the Clarke and Evans's sales. What a remarkable distinction pervaded the group! Not only was the manner that of a master, but of one whose accomplished technique was at the services of a high order of mind, evidencing, if one may say so, the gentleman's way of approaching the mistress of his heart. His sentiment in no instance that I can recall sinks into sentimentality. It grew out of a devotion to nature which was deep enough to merge the personal feeling in an intense and active sensibility to the impression of the scene itself. So that, without any posture of mind or even, perhaps, any set purpose, he is poetical. Had his medium been words, he would have been nearer to Wordsworth than to Tennyson; satisfied to interpret nature rather than to use her for the setting of some thought of his own. In this way he was much nearer to Rousseau and Daubigny than to Corot.

II

JOHN LA FARGE

II

JOHN LA FARGE

JOHN LA FARGE has given us two avenues of approach to his personality as an artist: one through his pictures, drawings, and decorations, the other through his writings. In the drama of his artistic doings the writings serve as the chorus, which from its platform in front of the actual stage interpolates a commentary on the main action, in language always illuminative, though sometimes of rather complex meaning. For it reflects, in fact, the complexity of its author's personality, his life-long habit of contemplation and the wide horizon over which his study has roamed, embracing many objects of desire inside and outside his art, to none of which he can tolerate a short cut, but the interdependence of which and the relative interest of the paths thereto, even the inevitable oppositions and compromises, he has always realized and valued. As Paul Bourget happily says, La Farge's "least words betray the seeker of a kind like Fromentin, who thinks out his sensations — a rare, a very rare power."

He was a student of art long before he entered upon it as a profession. It attracted him first as a form of culture, the practice coming later; quite an inversion of the usual progress of the art student, who gets manual facility and then culture — sometimes. Nor did art in his early days present the only form of culture. He received a classical training of the thorough sort that promotes an intimacy with classic thought and expression. His father's house in Washington Square, well stocked with books and pictures, was the rendezvous of cultivated people, many of them *émigrés* of the French Revolution or refugees from St. Domingo. When he visited Europe in 1856 he stayed in Paris at the home of his relatives, the St. Victors, where lived his bedridden great-uncle, author of many works, historical, critical, and artistic, who had known friends and foes of the French Revolution, had been an *émigré* in Russia and still retained his interest in all things, even to the theatres. Paul de St. Victor, writer and critic, was La Farge's cousin, and many remarkable and gifted people came to the house, — Russians, members of the Institute, priests, art critics, and literary men, among them Charles Blanc and Théophile Gautier.

La Farge had been taught to draw in a precise, old-fashioned way by his grandfather, Binsse de

St. Victor, a miniature painter of some talent, and during his visit to Europe he was advised by his father to study painting under some master, partly as an accomplishment, partly as an escape from a desultory interest in many things. He, therefore, entered the studio of Couture, who, however, recommended him to postpone painting and to study and copy the drawings of the old masters in the Louvre. "With quite a comprehension of my inevitable failure," he says, "I made drawings from Correggio, Leonardo, and others; but my greatest fascination was Rembrandt in his etchings." Later he followed the drawings of the old masters in Munich and Dresden, giving up an invitation to accompany Paul de St. Victor and Charles Blanc in a tour of northern Italy. "I have never known," he writes, "whether I did well or ill, for I cannot tell what the effect upon me might have been of the inevitable impression of the great Italian paintings, seen in their own light and their native place." He means at that period of his development, for he saw them later. Next he made a short stay in England and became acquainted with the works of the pre-Raphaelites, who did not seem disconnected from the charm of Sir Joshua and Gainsborough, or from the glories of Turner, "which yet offended by its contradiction of the urbanity and sincerity of the

great masters whom I cared for most." But the willingness of the pre-Raphaelites to meet many great problems of colour attracted him and confirmed him in the direction of his own study of colour. However, the most important European developments of that time seemed to him to be represented by Rousseau, Corot, Millet, and Delacroix. On his return to New York he entered a lawyer's office, for, as he says, " no one has struggled more against his destiny than I ; nor did I for many years acquiesce in being a painter, though I learned the methods and studied the problems of my art. I had hoped to find some other mode of life, some other way of satisfying the desire for a contemplation of truth, unbiassed, free, and detached." His friendship with William Hunt may have decided him in his career, or his marriage in 1860, which established him in Newport, R.I.

This brief summary represents quite a remarkable method of evolution for an artist; one that could not be adopted with impunity by many young men, its very leisureliness offering temptations, of which the least evil result might be dilettanteism. But La Farge was freed from the danger by the possession of moral and mental stamina, the breadth of his sympathies even demanding this gradual development. Nor was it unaccompanied with strenuousness of interest in

Copyright, 1886, by John La Farge.

ATHENS.

Decorative painting in the Walker Art Gallery, Bowdoin College.

By John La Farge.

the various phases of culture, of which art began by being one and grew to be the most absorbing.

It was significant that this dreamer should be attracted especially by the nature students among the living painters. That was indicative of the depth and sincerity of his contemplations. But it is still more significant that from the start he should have commenced a critical study of the problems of colour; this proved the independence of his sincerity. Another point of great significance, as affecting his subsequent career, is that, although he afterward made a close study of anatomy, in his apprentice days he seems to have drawn from drawings rather than from the living model, studying, in fact, the abstract made by others instead of the concrete directly studied by himself. Thus the habit of his mind was directed toward the generalization and significance of the figure rather than to its anatomical facts. This made him very early an enthusiastic admirer of Japanese art, and has proved at once the strength and weakness of his subsequent treatment of the figure.

It is frequently asserted that his drawing is not always correct, and from the point of view of the schools he would probably himself plead guilty to the charge. But those who insist upon the point do not perhaps quite comprehend his motive,

which is less the actual structure of the form than the inherent significance of the figure. Let us grant at once that the two motives are not antagonistic, that Millet's "Sower," for example, is as structurally correct as it is full of significance. But that is to put La Farge to the test of one of the greatest masters of drawing, by comparison with whom very few can stand. By far the greatest number of draughtsmen, while approaching him in correctness, will be far behind him in expression. On the other hand, in the case of La Farge, the significance of a pose or gesture, the vital expression of a figure, is generally admirable. I have in mind, for example, his drawing of Bishop Hatto, pursued by rats. The distance from the thigh to the toes would appear to be exaggerated; but how wonderfully the long drawn out, tense arc of the figure stimulates the imagination to a realization of the agony of the crisis. There is another point. The figure, as it is, so exactly contributes to the decorative balance of the picture. It may be that the instinct of the decorator determined the length of limb, and perhaps also, not at all improbably, the influence of the Japanese. It would not be difficult, for instance, to find in Outamaro's lovely prints of women just such an elongation to accentuate the *svelte* grace with which he wishes to invest them.

I make this suggestion with more confidence, because one can trace in the composition of this picture more than a little of the Japanese arrangement of full and empty spaces; that irregular form of composition which secures a balance by oppositions rather than by repetition of similarities. It is, indeed, the method of the nature student, as true of Velasquez and Rembrandt as of the Japanese. Not that La Farge with his choice appreciation of the old masters could be insensible to the influence of the Italians. His great altarpiece of the Ascension in the Church of the Ascension in New York is reminiscent in its structure of Raphael's "Disputá." The space is very similar in shape, and filled with a broad band of figures across the base, a central figure in the upper space, and flanking arcs of angels. Again the mural paintings of "Music" and the "Drama" in the music room of Mr. Whitelaw Reid's New York house were evidently suggested by the pastoral scenes of the Venetian painters. The latter, however, were themselves, no doubt, suggested by the desire to emancipate painting from the rigidity of preconceived formulas of composition, and it is just this attempt to discover a compromise between the natural and the conventional which is so marked a characteristic of La Farge's treatment of mural painting.

It may have been an early feeling after this that at least helped to draw him toward Rembrandt, especially toward his religious subjects. I find more than a little of the latter's influence in the mural paintings in the churches of St. Thomas and of the Incarnation in New York, particularly in the solemn, serious naturalism of the grouping; in the humble devotion with which the spirit of the occasion has been comprehended, and in the significance of gesture and expression, but especially of gesture, through which this spirit has been embodied. A boy's freshness of faith, dignified by a man's realization of its import — a quality very rare at any period, and quite likely to be overlooked in this one. It is the outcome of a religious temperament — a thing very different from the religious habit — born of a capacity to feel deeply the significance of things, and by instinct and culture fitted to see the beauty inherent in the significance, whether it be the significance of the spiritual or of the material life or of the subtle analogy between the two. When the painter can comprehend this and set it down on the threshold of every-day experience, in such a way as to make it intimate without being commonplace, its human meaning neither lessening, nor lost in, the splendour of its expression, we may reasonably call him great.

Copyright by John La Farge.

ALTAR PIECE — Church of the Ascension, New York.

By John La Farge.

And no one denies to La Farge a splendour of expression. He is that *rara avis* among artists, who not only sees the world as a pageant of coloured light, but has found means to express his visions. His inherited instinct for colour has been assiduously cultivated by observation and scientific study, the researches of Professor Root of Columbia University having been enthusiastically followed and adapted by him to his practical requirements. When circumstances brought to him the opportunity of executing windows, immediately came into play his extensive memories, his dreams of possibilities, and, equally, his independence of conventionalized methods. Finding that he could not reach adequate results in the material available, and realizing the weakness of existing methods, he experimented until he discovered the adaptabilities of opaline glass, which has a suggestion of complementary colours, "a mysterious quality of showing a golden yellow, associated with violet, a pink flush on a ground of green." Moreover, by the infinite variety of modulations, which its making admits, it allows a degree of light and shade in each piece of glass, which not only gives modelling, but increases the depth of tone, sufficient at places to make the darker parts melt softly into the harsh lead-line. This invention

by John La Farge of the applicability of opaline glass to the making of coloured windows has put a wide range of means in the hands of the artist, not only in the general richness and equally possible delicacy of effect, but in the increased subtlety attainable through complementary effects and effects of opposition; the material including all kinds of variety in the texture, quality, thickness, and even pattern of the glass, and also almost every variation of density and transparence. It is a palette of extraordinary range, perilously serviceable in the hands of an ambitious person of meagre knowledge and feeling, quite susceptive of commonplace exploitation in those of the ordinary designer. But in the hands of a true artist, who thinks in colour, and has a store of gathered observations backed with scientific assurance, it permits the fullest scope to his imagination, and the opportunity of realizing the most diverse and complex schemes of colour, allowing him to reproduce much of the mystery that time has wrought into the mediæval stained glass, and to add to the latter's chantlike simplicity of colour and structure the complicated harmonies of modern music. It is an art, indeed, that brings the decorator within measurable distance of the musical composer.

The new intent of this glass and the subsequent

developments which have made of it a new fabric were so much the outcome of La Farge's personal need of expression that it is not surprising he has reached results superior to those of others who employ the same medium. A reason which also contributes to his superiority is that his conception from the start formulates itself in colour, whereas the genesis of most windows would appear to be in the lineal design, clothed in colour afterward. In other words, like every true craftsman, La Farge thinks in his material. The effect of this has been, at least, twofold. In the first place, there has always been a reciprocity of influence between his imagination and his material; while he has been big enough to anticipate the possibilities, he has been big enough also to accept the limitations of the medium. In the second place, — and this really follows from the former, — he has preserved an independence in the character of the design, neither attempting to reproduce that of the old cathedral windows, nor dipping, except occasionally, into that universal cook-book of the average designer, the ornament of the Renaissance. With a larger sense of fitness he found, if anywhere, a prototype for his motives in Eastern art, not only in the mosaics of Byzantium, but in the jewelled inlays, lacquers, textiles, and *cloisonné* of Japan. Particularly is this true of the windows

of pure decoration which he has executed for private houses and again of those superb windows in the west end of Trinity Church in Boston. In these a cultivated taste will be disposed to feel that the splendour and mystery of the fabric are most abundantly manifested. It is pure decoration of the most subtle and resplendent kind.

On the other hand, as soon as the figure is introduced, particularly when the figure must subserve a religious sentiment, a compromise has to be effected between the abstract decoration and the concrete form, between the conventional and the naturalistic. And the inevitable antagonism between the two has become more difficult to reconcile in these days, both for the artist and for ourselves who enjoy his work, because we are no longer satisfied with the simple abstractions of the human form, which sufficed for the childlike faith and narrower experience of ancient peoples. In all his figure windows, therefore, it is most interesting to study how he has eschewed the pictorial motive, which unfortunately the immature taste of the public so persistently demands, and to which, either on compulsion or because he knows no better, the average designer inclines. La Farge, on the contrary, while frankly admitting the claims or the necessity of naturalistic treatment, endeavours, as far as possible, to find some modern form of

abstraction for the figure, and to offset it with a freer abstraction or conventionalization in the rest of his composition; so that while the significance of the figure, its form and sentiment, is not swamped, there yet survives the impression that the window is not a picture in glass, but an elevated decoration of transparent and translucent mosaic, inlaid in a *cloisonné* of ornamental lead-lines.

In a brief appreciation of this artist's work it is natural to dwell upon him in his capacity of a master decorator, for the whole trend of his activities, at first, perhaps, unconsciously, later with a purpose continually strengthened and expanded, has been in this direction. And he has proved himself a master not only within the restricted field of American art, but in comparison with the master decorators of Europe.

I have spoken of La Farge's writings being a commentary upon his artistic acts. Often it is in a man's lighter moments that he makes clear to us the workings of his mind, and La Farge has done so in the journal which he wrote during a vacation in the South Sea Islands. It is the spontaneous utterance of a scholar, at once a dreamer and an analyst; of an artist, also, who sees pictures everywhere; and its word-painting and many-faceted allusiveness to all kinds of memo-

ries, derived from art and life and literature, render these impressions of new scenes, which still retain some flavour of the antique world, unique in their exquisite beauty and suggestiveness. Let me quote one passage: "From the intricate tangle of green we saw the amethyst sea and the white line of sounding surf, cutting through the sloping pillars of the cocoanuts that made a mall along the shore; and over on the other side of the narrow harbour the great high green wall of the mountain, warm in the sun, its fringe of cocoanut groves and the few huts hidden within it softened below by the haze blown up from the breakers. All made a picture not too large to be taken in at a glance." Nor yet too distant. The harbour, observe, is narrow and bounded by a high green wall of mountain. The picture was not shaping itself to him as it might have done to the eyes of a pure landscapist, but in a comparatively flat pattern, as of a wall or window decoration. He sees it with the instinct of a decorator and with his own personal predilections; for he dwells upon the combination of green and blue, which any student of his work may feel to have particular fascination for him. He notes in one part the tangle of green, its suggestive subtlety of pattern and tone; in another, where the huts are half hidden, the welcome spot of density; again,

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THE ANGEL OF THE SUN.

Decoration in the Church of the Paulist Fathers, New York.

By John La Farge.

the value of mystery in the haze; and finally he correlates the beauties of contrasted forms and spaces and the varying brilliance and softness of the coloured light. As I said, it is a decorator's vision, and the same in their different degrees of sketchiness is revealed in the water-colour drawings made at the same time. They are so many notes and records of a mind perpetually intent on decorative problems.

Recently he wrote a short but exceedingly suggestive appreciation of Puvis de Chavannes, suggestive most of all because of its conscious and unconscious implication of his own experience and desires with those of a brother master in decoration. In their moral and mental elevation there is much affinity between the two men: Puvis, a Burgundian by birth, by education a Lyonnais, simultaneously, therefore, romantic and logical; La Farge, of French descent with romantic and adventurous associations, yet influenced by the vital practicalness of American environment. Both have sought to reconcile their respect for tradition with their interest in the living present; and to recognize the limitations imposed both by their medium and by their own individual personality, disciplining themselves to accept the inevitable and to carry their personal development to its farthest possibility. Its manifestations

in each case are widely different: the robust Puvis detaching himself more and more from the material and tending to an extreme of spiritual refinement; the frailer physique of La Farge reaching out farther and farther toward the interpretation of spirit by means of material splendour. The differences were personal and local; but in the quality of their minds and their attitude toward art there is an unquestionable affinity between these two preëminent master decorators.

If I read La Farge's art aright, it is the product of a wide and penetrating vision, simplified by selection; the theme is then comprehended in its vital significance, and all the force of his imagination is assembled to embroider it with a web of elaborate orchestration.

III

JAMES A. McNEILL WHISTLER

III

JAMES A. McNEILL WHISTLER

WE are already far enough away from the middle of the last century to gain a fair perspective of it. In matters of belief and feeling, it was a period of little faith and less initiative. Men moved forward with their faces turned backward, — in the religious world, seeking ideals in mediævalism; in art, also, borrowing their motives from the past. It was a time of rediscovery, of revivals; less of new birth or growth than of new assimilations. Velasquez, for example, was found to exist; so, also, Rembrandt; and Caucasian civilization became conscious of an Oriental art from farther round the globe than the Levant or even India. Japan was discovered. To-day these three names represent potent influences in art. A few years ago their significance was not appreciated beyond the studios; still a few years farther back, and scarcely even there. It was Whistler's discernment that early recognized their worth; his genius that utilized the significance so uniquely. How he did it is characteristic of himself, but

equally of the modernity of which he is so consummate a representative.

And what of this modernity? Intrinsically it is not a new thing, though taking on some special colour from its particular time of reappearance, being indeed a culture of manners rather than of convictions. It is analytical, for it is part of, or compelled by, the contemporary scientific movement; it is intolerant of restraint, except such as it chooses for itself; is callous when not personally interested, and finds its interest in subtleties; its faith is self-found and felt to be honoured by the discovery; in scope not so much broad and embracing as diffused and discriminating; for depth, it substitutes a carefulness about many things, and for sincerity a nice tactfulness. It is polished, dainty in taste and manners, seeking the essence of life in its most varified appeal to the senses, even sometimes in abnormal depravity. It is, in fact, the very antithesis of brawn and muscle, of hard and wholesome thinking, of the *bourgeoisie* and Philistinism, through which a comfortable world is provided for modernity to bask in, either as a rarely delicate exotic or a upas tree.

While Whistler as a man, in his attitude toward the world, has been the Beau Brummel of this nineteenth-century modernity, he has kept his art in a beautiful isolation, selecting for it

only the choicest contributions of the spirit of the age and impressing upon them the fine distinction of his unique personality. Thus, while some of his contemporaries in the search for new sensations pushed their analysis into the gutter, his work has been invariably fragrant and pure. He has been a consistent apostle of beauty, of the sane and normal type of it. I do not mean beauty as it is commonly understood, for he has had his very personal ideas and his own modes of reaching them; but that the source in which he has always looked for them has been sane and normal; so that, amid the craving for new sensations and for new forms of expression, by which, like others, he has been affected, and with a taste also for notoriety and for shocking the vulgar, he has never in his art deviated from the sweet and wholesome. Nor has he lived without a strong faith. He has believed in himself without reservation, and just as absolutely in his art as he has formulated it. There is one god, and Whistler is its prophet; a creed narrow and intolerant, but abundantly justified, if you accept his god, which, again, is Whistler — the spiritual *ego* within him to which all his life he has tried to give an adequate expression.

For his faith at root is a very simple one: the love of beauty and the expression of it; only

beauty with him is one of essence and significance, quite removed from any literary allusiveness, and as far as possible expressed by means which are solely the products of brush or etching needle, sensation and method approximating as much as may be to the exclusively abstract ones of music. He cannot escape the concrete altogether and must often use as vehicles of expression things to which the dictionary assigns terms, and to which the association of memory and ideas has given a verbal significance. But even in using these he feels such significance extraneous, and subordinates it as far as possible to the special æsthetic significance of the pictorial art. It is the meaning that these things have for the artist's peculiar vision that he tries to keep free from other allusion — abstract. It is not the object before him for the time being that is worth his consideration, but the enjoyment of the purely æsthetic impression of it aroused in his own mind, of which he seeks to express the essence in his picture. It is a theory of art all but too subtle for human nature's daily food; in a world in which we are continually confusing cause and effect, the object with the subject, the source of our enjoyment with the enjoyment itself; a theory quite intolerable when exploited by a mediocre painter, or by a facile painter of mediocre mind;

only, perhaps, so acceptable in Whistler's case, because it is essentially a product of his own unique originality.

It was his craving for abstract expression as well as for abstract sensation that led to his symphonies; and the storm of abuse and ridicule which they aroused gave him, no doubt, a keener relish for such studies. It would be too much to say that any of them were done deliberately to mystify the public; but that he found a sly relish in the mystification is most probable, and one may believe that some of these, to him only experiments in the record of impressions, were exhibited with the Satanic purpose of infuriating a public, so enamoured of the "finished picture." To-day, however, these studies are applauded, and Whistler is probably as contemptuous of the undiscriminating approval as of the indiscriminate abuse. For really their vogue is as open to suspicion as would be a vogue of Bach. In their lack of any graspable theme and in their delicately elaborated orchestration of tone they can be appreciated, priced, that is to say, at their proper worth, only by those whose sense of colour is very cultivated; nor even, perhaps, by all of them, for these impressions are so personal to their author that they must always mean more and otherwise to him than to others.

The vogue, therefore, may well make him sad, and sadness with Whistler takes the form of contempt. It is the distortion of his character or the bias to its flaws produced by opposition. Conviction has stiffened into arrogance, individuality become deflected toward an attitude of pose. These blemishes are absent from his work, which is always serene and lovable; they are merely incidental to the man and should not enter into an appreciation of his art, except that he has himself forced a recognition of them even upon his admirers. It is this aspect of him which Boldini has thrust upon the world in his well-known portrait. I have always resented it, for it is founded only on partial fact, suppressing the better facts and smacking too much of Boldini himself and of the pruriency of suggestion, with which he has invested so many portraits. The Whistler that we see in this picture, sitting sideways on a chair, his elbow on the back of it and his long fingers thrust through the snaky black hair, represents the last word in modernity; thrilling with nervous vibration, keyed to snapping intensity; a creation of brilliant egoism, quivering on the edge of insanity; the quintessence of refined callousness and subtlety. How much truer to the man and the artist is Rajon's portrait; nimbly impressionable, clever and elegant, the lurking devil in

From the Luxembourg Gallery.

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST'S MOTHER.

By James A. McNeill Whistler.

the eye and touch of cynicism on the lip not enough to disguise an underlying sweetness and freshness of mind. The other, in its half-truth, is a travesty; this one, very expressive of the mingled qualities of this remarkable man.

For none but a man of peculiar sweetness of mind could have conceived that masterpiece in the Luxembourg, "The Portrait of My Mother." Garbed in black, as you will remember, she sits in profile, with her feet upon a footstool and her hands laid peacefully and elegantly on her lap; the lawn and lace of her cap delicately silhouetted against the gray wall. She gazes with tranquil intensity beyond the limit of our comprehension along the vista of memories, leading back through maternity to a beautiful youth. Nor is there any cynicism in "The White Girl," that symphony in white, rejected at the Salon of 1863, when the artist was twenty-nine years old, but conspicuous in the *Salon des Refusés*. The girl stands mysteriously aloof from all contact with, or suggestion of, the world, her dark eyes staring with a troubled, wistful look, as if she had been surprised in her maiden meditation and were apprehensive of something she cannot fathom, and is too reliant upon herself to wholly fear. The picture is no brilliant epitome of shallowness, but an almost reverential conception, in exquisitely

idealized degree, of the poetry of maidenhood, maturing normally. In both these pictures, which come as near as anything which Whistler has done to the generally accepted idea of a subject, it is the significance, in the one case of motherhood, in the other of maidenhood, that he has dwelt upon, and in both with the fullest reliance upon the æsthetic suggestion to the sense, respectively, of black and gray, and of white, elaborated to an extreme of subtlety. It would be impossible, I mean, that the colour schemes, for example, could be reversed; each is so intentionally and conclusively the language fitted to the idea, that one might as well try to put the words of Juliet into the mouth of Volumnia.

In pictures like "The Music Room," there is a further step toward abstraction. So far as it represents the interior of a room with walls of ivory-white set off with dainty rose-sprigged curtains, in which a lady in black riding-habit stands by a marble mantelpiece, while a child in white frock sits a little farther back reading, it is a *genre* picture of that sort that Alfred Stevens painted, done not for any particular significance in the figures, but for the opportunity which it yields of a delicate scheme of colour and exquisite adjustment of values, and for the pure enjoyment of representing the æsthetic significance of these qualities.

From the collection of Colonel Frank J. Hecker.

THE MUSIC ROOM.

By James A. McNeill Whistler.

But it is at once more subtle and more daring than Stevens could have wrought. It involves a problem, the very difficulty of which no doubt keyed the artist to enthusiasm, to keep the child in white behind the figure in black, and to make the latter a distinguished ornament in the picture, while still preserving its pliant relation to its light surroundings — a problem not improbably suggested, in part at least, by one of Outamaro's prints, at any rate in its Caucasian transposition worthy to be compared with the work of the Japanese master. Nor is it only a problem in skill. Jet is beautiful in tone and texture, and so is ivory, and the combination of the two, set off with delicate accents of rose, creates a beauty of its own.

"Variations in Flesh and Green — The Balcony" may be selected as a still further advance toward abstract sensation and expression. These girls in kimonas, standing, sitting, and reclining on the edge of a river with a glimpse of factory chimneys across the water, mean nothing in a "subject" sense, and lack even the reasonableness of the figures in the previous picture. They are parts of a fantasy, pure and simple, to which they contribute impersonally; an artist's dream of atmosphere and colour, which you will enjoy or not, according as you can enter into the abstract

intention of the artist. Reaching the essence of beauty to a degree still less alloyed is such a picture as "Bognor — Nocturne": blue smooth water with shadowy shapes of trawlers gliding like dusky phantoms, and of figures standing in the shallow surf; blue sky and atmosphere, penetrated with silvery luminousness. It is a scene of exquisite refreshment to the spirit, mysteriously etherealized, the artist being so absorbed with the spiritual presence of the summer night that his own soul echoes its very heart-beats.

Once again, then, in all these pictures, it is the essence or innermost significance of the theme that Whistler treats; itself a quality so immaterial that he shrinks from expressing even matter in too distinct or tangible a form, enveloping it in a shrouded light, representing it as a concord of coloured masses with a preference for delicate monotony of hues and soft accentuations, seeking by all means to spiritualize the material. And this without loss of stateliness; he has learned the dignity of the great line from Velasquez, and from him, too, the magisterial use of blacks and grays. Nor with the wild irrelevance of the visionary; there are piquancy and virility in all his pictures, not of lively colour and rampageous brush work, but attained through subtle surprises of detail and decorative original-

From the collection of Charles L. Freer, Esq.

NOCTURNE — BOGNOR.

By James A. McNeill Whistler.

ity — qualities gleaned from the Japanese. Again, in the trancelike intensity of Rossetti's figures, he may have found a quality akin to his own spirituality of sentiment, just as his love of light and of delicate discrimination of values links his art to that of the impressionists. And out of these various influences, his own personality, irresistibly original, at once fanciful and penetrating, serene and nervous, permeated with the quintessence of sensuous refinement, he has fashioned for himself a language "faithful to the colouring of his own spirit," in the strictest sense original and stamped with style — a style that is simple, earnest, grand.

And even closer precision of personal expression appears in Whistler's etchings. For to one who seeks to render, not the facts, but his sense of the facts, etching offers greater freedom than painting. It is the art of all others which permits an artist to be recognized by what he *omits*, the one in which the means employed may be most pregnant of suggestion and in closest accord with the personal idiosyncrasy of the man. To Whistler, therefore, with his intense individuality, his discerning search for the significance of beauty and his instinct for simplicity and economy of means which will yet yield a full complexity of meaning, etching early became a cherished form of expression. In the "Little French Series"

(1858), the "Thames Series" (1871), the "First Venice Series" (1880), and the "Second Venice Series" (1887), as well as in other plates etched in France, Holland, and Belgium, he has proved himself the greatest master of the needle since Rembrandt. Indeed, the eminent painter-etcher and connoisseur, Sir Francis Seymour Haden, is credited with the assertion that, if he had to dispose of either his Rembrandts or his Whistlers, it would be the former that he would relinquish.

There is a great difference, even in the point of view, between the Dutch master and his modern rival. Both approached their subject, if one may say so, in a reverential way; but the former with an absorption in the scene and a desire to reproduce it faithfully. Whistler, on the other hand, with more aloofness of feeling, selecting the mood or phase of it on which he chooses to dwell that he may inform it with his own personal sense of significance. The Rembrandt print — to borrow De Quincey's distinction — is rather a triumph of knowledge; the Whistler a triumph of power. While the method of both represents the highest degree of pregnant succinctness, Rembrandt drew the landscape while Whistler transposes from it. The visible means, in his later etchings, become less and less, their sig-

From the collection of Charles L. Freer, Esq.

THE BALCONY.

By James A. McNeill Whistler.

nificance continually fuller; and in his study of phases of nature he has carried the interpretation of light and atmosphere beyond the limits of Rembrandt.

In the "Thames Series," which has perpetuated the since vanished characteristics of the old river side, he came nearest to the Dutch etcher, recording the scenes with a comprehension of detail as complete as that of Rembrandt's "Mill." Seeking always the significance of his subject, he seems to have felt that here the significance lay in the curious, dilapidated medley of details; that even a weather-worn timber and the very nails in it contributed their share to the impression, so that, while he must needs select and omit, the problem was one of how much to *avoid* omitting. On the other hand, in his later prints, the problem is reversed. Following his own personal evolution toward more complete abstraction, both in sense and expression, it is how little he may put in and yet express the full significance.

Whistler's art, in brief, is logically related, alike to realism, to the poetry of the men of 1830, and to the motives of the impressionists, and represents the wider influence of his times in its keen analysis of phenomena and the independently personal bias he has given to it; in the search for new sensations of the most subtle kind and in

a tendency at times to exalt good manners, that is to say style, above the qualities of intrinsic merit. His art has been too much a product of himself, notwithstanding that it reflects in spiritualized form the higher tendencies of his age, for him to have been the founder of a school or to have influenced followers directly. Yet, indirectly, his influence has been weighty. Alike by his example and by his pungent utterances he has been instrumental, more than others, in giving a *quietus* to mediocrity in art, both to the bathos of the literary picture and to the banality of merely imitative painting. Mediocrity still lingers and must linger as long as commonplace minds devote themselves to painting; but its prestige has been so successfully impaired that now we regard a taste for it on the part of a collector of pictures as an infantile disease, like the measles, incidental to an early career of appreciation, though not necessarily fatal to more matured connoisseurship.

Whether we shall ever reach that degree of cultivation which will need no further stimulus to enjoyment in a picture than such abstract suggestion to the imagination as music affords, time alone will show. Meanwhile, as we are able to conceive of a picture now, it has its genesis in the concrete, from which even Whistler has not tried to emancipate himself entirely. There is a beauti-

ful humanity in most of his work, the humanity of human nature or the human relation of the landscape to ourselves; and if he is able sometimes to enchant us without any apparent human significance, it is because he is Whistler — a genius.

IV

JOHN SINGER SARGENT

A SUMMARY of John S. Sargent's position as an artist must recall the exhibition of his work shown at Copley Hall, Boston, in 1899. There were exhibited some fifty portraits and seventy-five sketches and studies, while hard by in the Museum hung his large subject picture, "El Jaleo," and in the library could be seen his mural decorations. It was an impressive showing, both in amount and quality, for an artist then little over forty years of age.

But Sargent has been a favoured child of the Muses, and early reached a maturity for which others have to labour long and in the face of disappointments. He, however, had never anything to unlearn. From the first he came under the influence of taste and style, the qualities which to this day most distinguish his work. The son of a Massachusetts gentleman who had retired from the practice of medicine in Philadelphia, he was born in Florence, and there spent his youth. The home life was penetrated with refinement;

a good classical and modern education came in due course, and all around him were the dignity and beauty of Florence, its tender beauty of atmosphere and colour and the noble memorials of its galleries and streets. Perhaps no city in the world has so distinctive a spirit, at once stimulating to the intellect and refining to the senses. Those of us who have felt it only after years of buffeting in a grosser atmosphere can but guess what it means to have come under its influence from childhood, during the impressionable period of youth up to eighteen. And not as a mere resident of the place, from the force of habit purblind to its charm, but quickened by parents who themselves were products of another kind of civilization, keen to appreciate, to absorb, and to live in its spirit; possessed, also, of the American temperament so alert and sensitive to impressions, while removed from the dulling influence of our exceeding practicalness.

When the young Sargent knocked at the studio of Carolus-Duran in the *Boulevard Montparnasse* with a portfolio of studies under his arm, drawings from Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese, he was no smart young student, full of up-to-date ideas. Very modest he is described as being, of quiet, reflective disposition, pleased that his drawings won the approval of the master and the

CARMENCITA.
By John S. Sargent.

enthusiasm of the students, and eager to set himself to learn. With a facility that was partly a natural gift, partly the result of a steady acceptance of the problems presented, he proceeded to absorb the master; his breadth of picturesque style and refined pictorial sense, his sound and scientific method, not devoid of certain tricks of illusion and his piquant and persuasive modernity — the sum total of an art that was a modern Frenchman's paraphrase of one of the biggest of the old masters, Velasquez. At twenty-three he painted a portrait of Carolus, which shows he had absorbed his master so thoroughly as to be unconscious of the incidentals of his method and to have grasped only the essentials with such complete assimilation, that what he produces is already his own. Later, he himself visited Madrid and came under the direct spell of Velasquez. The grand line he had learned while still a boy, and from Carolus the seeing of colour as coloured light, the modelling in planes, the mysteries of sharp and vanishing outlines, appearing and reappearing under the natural action of light, a realism of observation at once brilliant and refined, large and penetrating; and all these qualities he found united in the subtly grandiose canvases of the great Spaniard. Finally, from all these influences, he has fashioned a method very much his own.

And how shall one describe this method? It reveals the alertness and versatility of the American temperament. Nothing escapes his observation, up to a certain point at least; he is never tired of fresh experiment; never repeats his compositions and schemes of colour, nor shows perfunctoriness or weariness of brush. In all his work there is a vivid meaningfulness; in his portraits, especially, an amazing suggestion of actuality. On the other hand, his virtuosity is largely French, reaching a perfection of assurance that the quick-witted American is, for the most part, in too great a hurry to acquire; a patient perfection, not reliant upon mere impression or force of temperament. In its abounding resourcefulness there is a mingling of audacity and conscientiousness; a facility so complete that the acts of perception and of execution seem identical, and an honesty that does not shrink from admitting that such and such a point was unattainable by him, or that to have attained it would have disturbed the balance of the whole. And yet this virtuosity, though it is French in character, is free of the French manner, as indeed of any mannerism. For example, his English men and women, his English children especially, belong distinctly to English life. Though he may portray them in terms of Parisian technique, he never confuses the idioms,

being far too keenly alive to the subtle differences of race.

This skill of hand is at the service of a brilliant pictorial sense. Like a true painter, he sees a picture in everything he studies. Perhaps it would be truer to say that he sees *the* picture, the one which for the time being has taken possession of his imagination and to which he is willing to sacrifice even truth, or at least some portion of truth, rather than to permit the integrity of his mental picture to be impaired. This pictorial sense is one of the sources of the greatness and of the less than greatness in his work. It gives to each of his canvases a distinct æsthetic charm; grandiose, for example, in the portrait of "Lady Elcho, Mrs. Arden, and Mrs. Tennant," ravishingly elegant in the "Mrs. Meyer and Children," delicately quaint in the "Beatrix," and so on through a range of motives, each variously characterized by grandeur of line, suppleness of arrangement, and fascinating surprise of detail; used with extraordinary originality, but always conformable to an instinctive sense of balance and rhythm. And then, too, how tactful is the selection of pose, costume, and accessories! With what taste he creates environment for his conception of the subject!

It is, however, in regard to the conception of his subject that Sargent challenges criticism. How

far does he render the character of the sitter? To say that his characterization is slap-dash and superficial is, surely, going too far. It was confuted by that exhibition of fifty portraits, which represented at least fifty distinct persons. Nor with that panorama of his art in one's memory can one admit that he has no real sympathy with his sitters. Very possibly, however, it is not a *personal* sympathy, and for two reasons. He is a picture maker before he is a portraitist, and in portraiture has less interest in the individual than in the type which he or she represents. This latter particular is symptomatic, partly of the artist himself and partly of his times. He is not of the world in which he plays so conspicuous a part, but preserves an aloofness from it and studies it with the collectedness of an onlooker interested in the moving show and in its general trends of motive, but with an individual sympathy only occasionally elicited, as when he paints Georg Henschel, like himself, a musician. Again it is an affectation of the class from which most of his sitters, especially the ladies, are drawn to exhibit the studied unconviction so deliciously represented in Anthony Hope's "Dolly Dialogues." The elegant shallowness of so many of his portraits is true enough in a general way, and very likely in the individual case. There is another type, embodying the thinking-for-herself

and the greater latitude of action of the modern woman. They are, to a certain extent, the product of an age of nerves, and in his portraits of them there is perceptible an equivalent restlessness of manner, a highly strung intention, almost a stringiness of nervous expression. Again, I can recall in the Boston exhibition two portraits of ladies whose *esprit* was of a kind that quiet folks would consider fast. Their cases also had been keenly diagnosed and met with the skill of an artist who did not care to extenuate, nor on the other hand had fallen under personal subjection to the physical attractiveness, but set down what he saw and surrounded it with the elegant atmosphere that was its salvation in real life. It is here that he compares to such advantage with a painter like Boldini. Sargent has instinctive refinement. It would be quite impossible for him to have any feelings toward his subjects other than those of a true gentleman; and, though he may represent in a lady a full flavour of the modern spirit, he never allows the modernity to exceed the limits of good taste. For the same reason Sargent's pictures, though many of them have a restlessness of their own, seem quiet alongside Boldini's. The latter makes a motive of nervous tenuosity, and his pictures, if seen frequently, become wiry in suggestion, and defeat their own purpose of being

vibrative; but Sargent's, controlled by a fine sobriety of feeling, another phase of his unfailing taste and tact, retain their suppleness. Their actuality is all the more convincing because it is not the motive, but an incident.

Yet, even so, this actuality is of a very different quality from that reached by the old masters. I have in mind an inevitable comparison, suggested by his portrait of Mr. Marquand in the Metropolitan Museum with one by Titian on the same wall and with a Franz Hals, a Velasquez, and a Rembrandt in an adjoining gallery. In all these latter there is a gravity of feeling that is not alone due to the subduing effects of time; while Sargent's portrait, even apart from the sleek fatness of the brush work which age will mature, is the product of a habit of mind altogether different. It lacks the intimacy of the "Wife" of Franz Hals, the penetrating depth of the "Doge Grimani," the quiet assurance of Velasquez's "Don Carlos," and the intense sympathy of the Rembrandt, though the last two are only moderate examples of the masters. Instead, it reveals a certain assertiveness in its assurance, an intensity of nervous force rather than of intellectual or sympathetic effort, a brilliant epitome rather than a profound study. It has not the permanence of feeling, either in its characterization or method;

From the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

PORTRAIT OF MR. MARQUAND.

By John S. Sargent.

that suggestion of perennial, stable truth, which, so far as we can judge from the past, would insure it a place among the great old masters of the future. Among the masters we may feel certain that Sargent will be reckoned as having been one of the most conspicuous figures of his age; but his vogue will rise and dwindle according to the amount of interest felt for the time being in the age which he represented; it will scarcely have that inevitableness of conviction, which, when once recognized, must abide. If this forecast is correct, the reason is that Sargent, though raised above his time, scarcely reveals in his portraits elevation of mind; he has the clear eye of the philosopher without his depth and breadth of vision; he has possessed himself of his age, and the age has taken possession of him. He swims on its sea with strokes of magnificent assurance, but with a vision bounded by the little surface waves around him; he has not sat above upon the cliffs, quietly pondering its wider and grander movements.

So the intimacy revealed in the great majority of Sargent's portraits is of that degree and quality which passes for intimacy in the polite society of to-day — a conformability to certain types of manner and feeling, with interesting little accents of individuality, that shall distinguish without too keenly differentiating; traits of style rather than

of personality. Sometimes there is even less than this. The subject would seem to have got upon the artist's nerves, interfering with the usual poise of his study, so that he seems to have allowed himself to be sidetracked on to some loopline of the temperament. Occasionally he touches a deeper level of intimacy, as in the portraits of Henschel, Mr. Penrose, and Mr. Marquand, and oftentimes in children's portraits, notably in that of Homer St. Gaudens. But for the most part, I believe, it is not the personality of the sitter that attracts us so much as that of the artist, which he has seized upon the occasion to present to us; a personality of inexhaustible facets and of a variety of expression that, for the time being at least, creates an illusion of being all-sufficient.

What a contrast he presents to Whistler, with whom he shares the honour of being among the very few distinctly notable painters of the present day! Sargent with his grip upon the actual, Whistler in his search for the supersensitive significance, are the direct antipodes in motive. Each started with a justifiable consciousness of superiority to the average taste of his times; but while Whistler, on one side of his character a man of the world, has in his art withdrawn himself into a secluded region of poetry, Sargent, almost a recluse,

has delighted his imagination with the seemings and shows of things and with their material significance.

Is the reason for this merely that success claimed him early and that he has not been able to extricate himself from the golden entanglement, or that deeper one, noticeable in many artists, that their artistic personality is the direct antithesis of that personality by which they are commonly known to the world? Otherwise, this man with his gift of seeing pictures, with his power of a brush that seems loaded with light rather than with pigment, with his smiting force or tender suggestiveness of expression — what might he not have done had he followed the bent of his mind, a mind stored with culture, serene and reflective? Something, doubtless, less dazzling than his portraits, but more poetical, more mysteriously suggestive, more distinctly creative. As it is, some little studies of Venice, such as "Venetian Bead Stringers," come nearer probably to the true spirit of Sargent; to that exquisiteness of fancy which he developed more completely in the study of children lighting lanterns in a garden, "Carnation Lily, Lily Rose." The refined originality of this embroidery of light and shadow, the lights so brilliant, the shadows penetrated with mystery, the affectionate tenderness with which the children and flowers

are represented, the lovely imaginativeness of the whole conception, bespoke qualities which have appeared only partially in the portraits, and are altogether of a rarer significance than their vivid actuality. This picture is perhaps even more acceptable than his elaborate decorations in the Boston Public Library, because it represents more unreservedly an artist's vision and one of such delicate apprehensiveness. The decorations involve a more laboured, conscious effort to produce something noble, and the literary allusion encroaches somewhat upon the æsthetic. Yet to enjoy them we are not bound to thread our way through the maze of mythological suggestion. The panels are full of dignity and beauty, considered purely as decoration; finely rhythmical in the frieze, stern with tensity of form and deliberate harshness of colour in the lunette, a labyrinth of tapestried ornament in the soffit of the arch.

Their significance, both as decoration and allusion, is progressive, passing from the serene simplicity and tempered realism of the prophets, through the mingling of human tragedy and symbolism in the misery of the apostate Jews, up to the bewilderment of beauty and horror in the representation of the tangle of false faiths. Moreover, this graduation of motive bears a very skilfully adjusted relation to the architectural function

of the several spaces embellished. Unfortunately the room itself has very little architectural reasonableness, and is unworthy of the decorations, which will not establish their full dignity of effect until the remaining spaces are filled. So it is scarcely fair to compare them with Puvis de Chavannes's in the same building, which involve a completed scheme, for which, too, the architects made due provision. Further, the motives of the two artists are so radically different: Puvis, content to shadow forth a vague conception in abstract terms; Sargent, seeking to embody the facts of men's mental and moral life in their direct and actual significance. It was a more daring problem, and one that perhaps is more closely knitted to the feeling of our times. The solution is a most notable attempt to bring the intellectual faculties into harmonious accord with the æsthetic.

It is along the line of these decorations and of "Carnation Lily, Lily Rose" that one believes the true Sargent may be discerned. In them he is giving utterance to himself; in his portraits responding with a certain *hauteur* to the allurements of his day.

V

WINSLOW HOMER

V

WINSLOW HOMER

IN the American section at the recent Paris Exposition, no painter made a more distinct mark than Winslow Homer. The foreign critics seemed to be conscious of a fresh note in his pictures: one not traceable to European influences, still less suggestive of Parisian technique; a note of unmistakable force and independence. Could it be considered representatively American?

Almost for the first time this question appeared to be asked with a real interest in the answer. Foreigners had long been acquainted with painters from America, who came over in increasing numbers, and showed a remarkable faculty of quickly assimilating the teaching and influences of Europe. But were there any distinctively American painters? Those students who remained in Europe, though many of them were individual and forceful men, merged themselves more or less completely in their new environment. What, then, became of those who returned to America? Presumably they carried back with them the Europeanisms

than in that of the French section as a whole. The Americans did not seem to be painting in obedience to some vogue, still less with the purpose of creating one; they were not thrashing around for motives which should electrify, by shock or thrill, and prove a brief sensation; nor, on the other hand, did they seem to be bent upon exhibiting the particular advantages of this or that method of technique. Their work for the most part was unassuming and straightforward, penetrated with realism and often tempered with poetic feeling; not less suggestive of the true painterlike way of conceiving the subject because it was executed with so little desire to exploit the mere painterlike facility of brush work, and yet showing a sound and advanced acquisition in technique. Indeed, it was in this particular that the American work showed superior to that of Norway, with the fresh, vigorous spirit of which it otherwise had so much in common. These qualities of earnest force, of directly independent vision and strong, straightforward treatment, so conspicuous in Homer's pictures, drew the foreign critics to a conclusion that this virile personality might be really representative of American art.

And so it is in the sense that it embodies the qualities and point of view for which all our most

individual painters are striving, though its power and depth place him above any direct comparison with other painters, unless it be with Homer Martin. Like the latter, his art has grown out of and into the circumstances of his environment, the most reasonable and fertile way of growth both in plant life and in the life of man. As a boy at Cambridge, Mass., he led the true boy's life, interested in animals, fond of fishing, observant also of the character and forms of nature, early recording his impressions on paper in a long series of methodically careful drawings. So, from the start, he learned to feel things and to see things for himself, and to express them as they affected him. The accident of an advertisement in a local paper landed him in a lithographer's workshop, where for two years his habits of methodical application were confirmed, leaving him at the end no less earnest and enthusiastic as a student, but determined that henceforth he would bow the neck to no one. After a brief sojourn in a Boston studio, during which he contributed drawings to Harper and Brothers, he came up to New York, refusing an offer to enter the art department of those publishers, but accepting an appointment at the outbreak of the war to represent them at the front. Meanwhile, he had been attending the night school of the

From the collection of Samuel Untermeyer, Esq.

THE WEST WIND.
By Winslow Homer.

National Academy, and taking lessons in painting from Frederic Rondel, a Frenchman, then in considerable repute as a painter.

His contributions to *Harper's Weekly*, though somewhat tamely precise in drawing, gave with much spirit the character as well as the episodes of camp life. Subsequently, on his own behalf, he paid two more visits to the Army of the Potomac, during which he put in practice what he had learned of painting, finally producing "Prisoners from the Front." This picture, shown at the exhibition of the National Academy in 1864, made a profound impression. Popular excitement was at fever heat, so the picture fitted the hour; but it would not have enlisted such an enthusiastic reception if it had not approximated in intensity to the pitch of the people's feeling. It has, in fact, the elements of a great picture, quite apart from its association with the circumstances of the time: a subject admirably adapted to pictorial representation, explaining itself at once, offering abundant opportunity for characterization, and in its treatment free from any triviality. On the contrary, the painter has felt beyond the limits of the episode itself the profound significance of the struggle in which this was but an eddy, and in the generalization of his theme has imparted to it the character of a type.

It is at this point that the true artist parts company with the mere practitioner, however accomplished. His work is more than of local and temporary interest; it has a savour, at least, of the universal, which keeps its significance from perishing. The savour need not necessarily be serious; it may be, as in Watteau's case, a distillation of the elegance of life; but with Homer its seriousness was inevitable, his temperament seeming to require a ground-bass of motive, grand and solemn. So when he occupies himself with character pictures, drawn from country life, they are comparatively trivial. He cannot, like Millet or Israels, discover the fundamental note of humanity beneath the individual. That note may be solemn enough, but it is not big enough in a forceful way to awake his imagination. His pictures of this genre are shrewdly studied and reasonably good in characterization; but, being detached from any background of big intention, their interest is merely local, and they are not done with that ease and style which might secure them technical distinction. But while waiting for the fountain of his motive to be again moved, how commendable it is that he did not set to work to repeat his success of the "Prisoners from the Front," as a smaller man would have been tempted to do!

At length, however, he finds again the fundamental motive which he needs, this time in the inspiration of the ocean. Off and on for many years he has led the life of a recluse on a spit of land near Scarboro, Maine, whose brown rocks piled in diagonal strata have from time immemorial withstood the onset of the Atlantic combers; an atom of impregnable stability in presence of vastness, solitude, and the perpetual flux of elemental forces. Grounded on his own stalwart individuality, he has kept himself aloof from the truck and scrimage of conventional life and filled his soul with the vastness of nature. How instances of this isolation from the world multiply in the story of art: Watteau retreating into the impenetrability of his own soul; Delacroix and Puvis de Chavannes into their barred studios; Rousseau, Millet, and the rest of their brotherhood into the recesses of the forest. Such isolation seems to be the road to greatness; partly, perhaps, because the man himself must have the elements of greatness in him to wish to do without the constant reënforcement of the world, where men and women prop their shoulders together and make believe that they are standing independently.

Henceforth, then, the ocean supplies the ground-bass of motive in Homer's art, and the

magnitude of its influence begins to inform his work. Deepening in significance, it becomes simpler in expression, and the simplicity is revealed in a fuller synthesis of manner; it grows in comprehension, in force and directness, gaining breadth and freedom of execution, greater purity and subtlety of colour. But he does not at once realize the full significance of the ocean itself. For a time he sees only its secondary significance in relation to the life of the fisherfolk, to whom it is, at once, the means of existence and a perpetual threat of danger. He paints such grandly dramatic pictures as "The Life Line," "Eight Bells," "Danger," "All's Well," "Undertow," "Watching the Tempest," and "Perils of the Sea"; a series of dramas to which the ocean is the background. How original they are: the subject seen so individually and carving itself out in the artist's imagination with such incisive force! Moreover, what wholesome breadth in his sympathy! He does not, like Cottet, the eminent painter of the fisherfolk of Brittany, picture the lives of his people as darkened by the pall of an irremediable fatality. He paints them as strong men and women, fronting with strength the vicissitudes of their existence; a point of view entirely akin to his own strong force of character. For here one reaches the tap root of his

From the collection of George A. Hearn, Esq.

THE MAINE COAST.

By Winslow Homer.

power. It is character: a personal strength; not of the complex kind that diffuses itself over many issues, but self-centred and direct. It is the actuality of things which perpetually seizes his imagination and on which he concentrates for the time being all his energy. And, surely, it is because this is so essentially the quality of present American civilization that he is preëminently the most representative of American painters. He is a product of his time, has sucked nourishment from it, and translated its nobler quality into terms of art.

But it is in his marines that he seems to reach the ripest maturity of his genius; and most completely, perhaps, in the "Maine Coast." The human import of the ocean has spoken home to him at last, in its least local significance. This picture involves a drama; but the players are the elements; the text, of universal language; the theme, as old as time. With the enlargement of purpose has come a corresponding grandeur of style; they realize, as no other marines with which I am acquainted, the majesty, isolation, immensity, ponderous movement and mystery of the ocean,

> "boundless, endless, and sublime —
> The image of Eternity — the throne
> Of the Invisible."

— They seem to be the spontaneous utterance of a soul full to overflowing with the magnitude of its thoughts.

A word must be said of Homer's skill in water colours. They have the quality of improvisation; snatches of impression, flung upon the paper in the ardour of the moment; tuneful bits of movement and colour, gladsome as the light and quick with the spirit of the occasion; and, being so close to their author's intention, they have a vigour and directness all his own.

VI

EDWIN A. ABBEY

VI

EDWIN A. ABBEY

IT was but yesterday, though in this country that is a long time ago, that American painters with the zeal of the neophyte were declaiming against the story-telling picture. Of course, we know that the objection was well taken in regard to a large class of pictures, wherein the story was the "thing," the way of telling it merely incidental and generally banal. But, like many other good principles pushed to excess, it resulted in a bathos as complete as that from which it would have saved us. Countless canvases have been painted, which possess no human interest and very little artistic justification; the barren issue of a mere negation. Slowly there is coming a reaction, and we are beginning to realize that a painter is none the less an artist for having something to say, may even ultimately depend for his ranking as an artist upon the quality of what he has to say, provided always that he says it in true painter fashion, with reliance, in fact, upon the vocabulary of his own particular art.

Among those who have never allowed themselves to be troubled by the art-for-art's-sake grain of truth in a bushel of chaff is Edwin A. Abbey. As an artist he must largely stand or fall upon his merit as a teller of stories. Have his stories been intrinsically interesting? Is his way of telling them artistic? That he has won his way from a stool at the drawing table of Harper and Brothers to a seat in the Royal Academy will not of itself convince a great many people, who are of the opinion that the story-telling picture is just what attracts the English and is the bane of their Academy. So, to reach an acceptable estimate of Abbey's rank as an artist, we must confine ourselves strictly to the character of his work, both in pen and ink and in paint.

It was in 1871, when he was nineteen years old, that he passed from his student days at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts into the employment of the Harpers, becoming one of the firm's band of illustrators, including, among others, Charles S. Reinhart, Howard Pyle, Joseph Pennel, and Alfred Parsons, who helped to draw attention in Europe to the superiority of the chief American illustrated monthlies. In 1878 came his first great opportunity, when he was commissioned to illustrate some of the poems of Herrick, and, in search of material, visited Eng-

land, where, except for a few short visits to this country, he has remained ever since. He betook himself to Stratford-on-Avon and Bidford, and later to Broadway, in Worcestershire.

Probably every true artist has within him a little world of his own, an island in the ocean of the world around him, a little spot of fact, on which flourish the trees and flowers and personages of his imagination. He is happy if circumstances permit him to work in it, and still more happy if his world of fancy has some correspondence to the actual world about him. Such was Abbey's happiness in having his footsteps directed through rural England. On the other hand, it could have been no accident that put it in his way to illustrate an old-time poem. The whole tenor of his subsequent work, since he has been at liberty to choose his own subjects, proves that the bias of his temperament is toward the past: to the days of picturesque costume, to a period remote enough to justify his fancy in selecting what it would, and ignoring what it would not. Nor do I overlook the fact that Abbey from the first has shown an ability to create from within himself an environment for his conceptions. Yet, even so, he could not have lighted on a place more fertilizing to such a temperament than the English scenes among which he has moved, with

their old-time associations and simple rural loveliness.

Broadway, for instance, is on the old post road that runs from London, through Oxford, on to Worcester and the west; within easy reach of Stratford and Kenilworth; its nearest station, Evesham, an old market town where Simon de Montfort, who first stood up for Englishmen against the Norman conquerors and for the rights of the common people, was slain in battle. As you near the village the pleasant vale of Evesham narrows into a horseshoe of hills, gentle slopes of verdure intersected with hedges, and rimmed with coppices and woods. Millet's house is at the entrance; a little farther on, the village green; and a little farther still a fine old gabled inn, where Cromwell, says the story, slept after his victory at Worcester. The broad street, continually mounting, passes between gabled farmhouses, buried in ivy, and cottages whose windows are bright with pot geraniums and little gardens filled with the flowers and herbs that Ophelia crooned of; past doorways that bear the date of that first James, "the most learned fool in Christendom"; past the remantled farmstead where Mary Anderson in her present *rôle* of wife and mother would fain forget that she has been a star; till it winds up in a thin line of white between the green and

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THE PENANCE OF ELEANOR, DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER.

By Edwin A. Abbey.

brown, and vanishes at the top of the hill, where beyond the mounds and hollows of a Roman encampment there is only the knowledge of a modern world. But you have scarce seen Broadway until you have penetrated into some of the cottage and kitchen interiors, with their wide-open hearths, smoke-stained timbered ceilings, from which hang hams and flitches of bacon and strings of onions; or passed to the backs of some of the houses and explored the dairies and quaint inglenooks of architecture, the trim vegetable gardens, the apple orchards and the barnyards, in close companionship with which is always the vivid green of the pleasant hills.

And it was in such places that Abbey gathered material for his illustrations to "Selections from the Hesperides" and "Noble Numbers" of Robert Herrick; to the "Old Songs" and "She Stoops to Conquer"; a spot wherein there must have been so much akin to his own moods of imagination. What wonder that his drawings have the fragrance of apple blossom and new-mown hay, the sweet musicalness of rippling brooks, the delicate atmosphere of the quiet life, and the savour of the old-time spirit! Within the limits of their particular intention, I doubt if any drawings are more perfect. Nor do I forget those drawings of the country by Alfred Parsons, made

about the same time and around the same spots; drawings which show such apprehension of the subtle qualities of rural beauty, such an eye for lovely fragments, such a sensitive artistry in picturing them. But the difference in the work of these two close friends throws a clear light on the special quality of Abbey's mind. Parsons pictured what he saw, interpreting the bit of nature in daintiest terms of art; while Abbey has the power of calling up a picture in his imagination. Yet in these drawings, at least, there is not an act of pure imagination; for the text of the poem or play supplies the idea. His skill is shown in the vivid recreation of the borrowed theme; in a delicate tact of choice, in his way of representing it and of illuminating it with a few choice details, and in his manner of setting the figures and objects in an atmosphere of their own. And I am not thinking now of that technical accomplishment which surrounds the figures with an envelope of lighted air, but of that more poetical gift which enables him to recreate the impression of the old-time feeling. As he says himself, a picture of bygone manners should be treated as an artist of its own period might have treated it. It is undoubtedly Abbey's faculty of borrowing the habit of mind as well as of manners of the past that gives a special distinction to these drawings.

But the recognition of this should not obscure the larger faculty of which this is only a phase, of being able to illuminate the text; to illustrate it in the true sense, for the term has fallen into discredit. This is partly the fault of publishers who are apt to insist on the most literal interpretation of the text, instead of allowing the artist to reinform the essence of the text with the spirit of his independent art; and partly, no doubt, to the inability of many draughtsmen to do more than baldly literalize. Thus we have a perpetual crop of so-called illustrations, either crowded with detail or almost flippantly negligent of anything but a certain loose bravura of line and spacing, clever, if you like, but tediously similar in general character. "She rose to greet him" — can you not predicate with tolerable accuracy how such and such a one among many illustrators would represent the incident? In Abbey's case you could not. The phrase would formulate in his mind a picture; complete, daintily suggestive, full of the charming quality of unexpectedness. But it is when an illustration tries to enforce the text by picturing some incident of prime importance in the story, with its play of passion, perhaps, and diverse possibility of appeal to different minds, that the effort of the ordinary illustrator is so hopelessly jejune. Such subjects are only

partially acceptable when one like Abbey essays them. Indeed, many of us may have felt that where, as in Shakespeare, the scene is one of very full significance, affecting the sensibility of different thoughtful readers as diversely as the same passage of music will affect its auditors differently, one's intelligence and power of appreciation can hardly be satisfied with any one man's crystallizing of such fluidity and diversity of appeal into a fixed presentment.

Abbey's illustrations to Shakespeare, though I know they are considered one of his greatest triumphs, have seemed to me to mark the beginning of less perfection. Again, I am not speaking of the craftsmanship, but of the spirit that animates the artist. So long as he confines himself to fragments from the scenes and to subordinate persons, or to those whose character is very simple and direct, his old charm remains; but when he attempts a complex character, as that of Portia, he necessarily cannot please all comers; and when he essays to build up scenes, the old spontaneity of imagination seems to dwindle. It is as if the foliage of a tree were beginning to lose its freshness and twinkle of artless movement; as if by degrees the leaves were losing sap and falling; and the naked boughs, the bare construction of the tree, were gradually being re-

vealed. And in Abbey's case it seems to be a process that has been going on more and more as he passed to the use of paint and to the building up of important *mise en scènes*, such as "Hamlet," "Richard, Duke of Gloucester, and the Lady Anne," or "The Penance of Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester."

His passage to paint was but a question of time; not only because to all artists it seems to offer the largest scope, but because, as a draughtsman, he has always had the feeling of a colourist. He has avoided hardness of contours, softening them with light and atmosphere, and merging the figures in the ensemble. The latter are not merely set against a background, they are always in and part of the picture. Further, he sees them as masses. You will scarcely find in his drawings authority of line, or fascination in the direction and quality of the line as line; instead, an infinity of little lines, not without feeling, doubtless, but without a separateness of æsthetic value. It is in the mass that they count; so that a woman's gown will not afford a sweep of movement, but a delightful tissue of lights and shadows. And when he proceeds to colour it is again the mass that captivates him — masses, especially of black, of crimson and white. But with this very marked love for colour, he is not a colourist in the

sense of weaving harmonies of colour. His pictures are still a balancing of masses rather than an effect of orchestration; and in the voluminous draperies that he introduces, while there is much influence of the amplitude of Venetian painting, there is little of its love of light or bigness of architectonic use of colour. In his treatment of coloured masses he is nearer to the manner of Holbein or Van Eyck. He does not seem to have an antecedent realization of the structure of his colour scheme, but builds it bit by bit, and the units more or less retain their separateness. Yet, while there is a lack of breadth in the picture as a whole, the parts are broadly treated, and often with a fine freedom of stroke. In his earlier paintings, such as the "Pavane," belonging to Mr. Whitelaw Reid, he was still drawing with his brush, but in his later ones the manner has become a painter's.

But no less natural than this progress of his technical evolution has been that of his mental one. In the course of this how could he well escape the Shakespeare cycle; not only because he had begun by interpreting old English poems and plays, and it was only a question of time as to when he would feel the influence of the poet-dramatist, but also because his imagination is of the dramatic kind. He would have made an ideal

From the collection of Whitelaw Reid, Esq.

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PAVANE.

BY EDWIN A. ABBEY.

(Painted in 1895 to occupy a special place in the room where it now is.)

stage manager of the highest type. As I have said, it is less by any originality of conception that his imagination is distinguished than by an aptitude for grasping the thought of another, reclothing it with actuality, setting it in its appropriate environment, and making it breathe again with the spirit of its time. But such a gift, on the stage at least, is rarely, if ever, accompanied by personal histrionic ability. It is a gift, of selecting, assembling, and combining, rather than of absorption of self in a given line of motive. The stage manager gives the appearance of life to a scene, the actor makes it live, and I wonder whether it be not true that in these Shakespearian canvases of Abbey's and in his mural decorations of the Holy Grail in the Boston Public Library there is a marshalling of the scene without the dramatic force. Do they carry us away and fill us with the emotion that we should receive in presence of the play well acted on the stage or in the reading of the legend intelligently? We find ourselves, I believe, rather studying the parts of those elaborate productions, the accuracy and beauty of detail, admiring the manipulative ability that has collected and coördinated, and waiting, meanwhile, for the drama to begin.

And if this is true, may it not be the result of choosing for pictorial representation a subject

of such complex emotions as the player's scene in "Hamlet," or one of such almost inexplicable subtlety as Richard's love advances to Anne as she follows in the funeral procession of her dead husband, or even one of comparatively directer significance as that of "The Penance of Eleanor"? In his last picture, the "Trial of Queen Katherine," he has not attempted to portray the climax of the scene, but the first pathetic pleading of the "most poor woman." Surely he did well to seize for representation this intermediate movement in the scene. He has gained thereby our human sympathy for a subject which might easily have been too complicated with highly strung emotions to be immediately intelligible. And it is one of the merits of this picture that its appeal is not only impressive but immediate. He has exhibited a tactful modesty, and I use the word with a thought of its real meaning, which is something choicer than moderation. He might have attempted a more heroic note, pitched it to the extreme possibility of the scene. But he avoids a *tour de force;* and draws us as much by persuasion as by strength; by the strength, in fact, of what he holds in reserve.

For the peculiar qualities of his strength are quietness and depth. One may find it in "The Jongleur," where coming from the castle gate,

flanked on each side by a sheltering range of roof, cheerless outside, but suggesting cheer within, across the waste of snow the man in motley's solitary figure is seen, wincing as he faces the cold and touching a strain on his mandolin to keep up his spirits. It is a beautiful picture, full of significant suggestion, not only of the immediate incident, but of the pathos of the life which lives to amuse others and of the emptiness of the world for one whose spirit is apart from it. It is a picture that compares in spontaneousness of expression with the earlier drawings, and has the fuller import of a maturer mind. Surely it is along lines such as this of purer imagination that Abbey will find his truest self.

To his decorations at the Boston Public Library much of what one has said of the Shakespeare paintings is applicable. They are not dramatic; their impressiveness is of a quiet and tempered sort. As one becomes familiar with these pictures, their power to make one feel the reasonableness and the beauty of the old thought; to feel it, too, not as something entirely strange, but as of present interest, grows and grows upon one. The intellect that has conceived them is not of the kind that leaps to an inspired result. Its quality is choiceness and delicacy of imaginativeness that wins us by persuasion.

In these pictures, as generally in his others, it is the women that he introduces who are the most captivating features of the conception. How beautiful they are! The alluring purity of expression, for example, in the faces of the Virtues is irresistible. Their heads, fragrantly pure, sway like a row of lilies in a gentle wind. Their motionless bodies are arrayed in costumes of delicate richness, each one of which is differently exquisite; the expression is mostly signified by movement of the hands and head; along the line there is a simultaneous act of unveiling, diversified by separate traits of modesty. Perhaps the most captivating of all the figures is that of the one who holds the young knight's left hand. She draws back and yields at the same moment, with a gesture in which there is a most subtle mingling of confidence and hesitation. The touch of man is so new to her, yet who may doubt this youth?

One of the gems of the whole series is the representation of Blanchefleur, sitting in her dove-gray wedding gown; rose-wreathed and holding roses in her lap; gazing before her with a look of surrender, so infinitely spiritual. In her as in the Virtues the painter has made purity adorable; neither ascetic nor ecstatic, not at variance with the humanity of womanhood, but

represented as its choicest flowering. Again, in his rendering of the angels he helps us to realize that they are creatures of the imagination; especially in the last picture, where their form is vague and they are felt rather as presences. And to this detachment from mere humanity spiritualized corresponds the expression of their faces; the rapt adoration of beings raised above the stir of human passion, in an atmosphere of calm where passivity is action.

However, judged as a series of decorations, following around the frieze of a room, these pictures are less satisfactory. They count as units, rather than in progression. One fails to find a rhythmic continuity or periodic emphasis of movement and colour, they vary conspicuously in size and colour and in character of composition and motive, and make their impression separately, instead of being in consecutive accord.

But if from a decorative standpoint these canvases are open to adverse criticism, let it not divert attention from their essential merit. Such big and serious effort is none too usual in painting — the opportunity for it, one must add in fairness, too infrequently occurs — so that, when one meets it, one's heart goes out in appreciative acknowledgment. Within the scope of Abbey's primary intention of commemorating a great

theme in a series of noble pictures and of re-investing old truth with present force, he has achieved a triumph that will win the admiration of all to whom seriously imaginative work appeals.

VII

GEORGE FULLER

VII

GEORGE FULLER

WHEN Fortune is apportioning qualities to the artistic temperament, she does not always include character. I mean that unflinching rectitude of purpose which at once answers "Adsum!" to the call of duty, and is not of the kind that says, "'I go, sir,' and went not." Sacrifice to the call of art is by comparison a slenderer quality. It is not so difficult to suffer for the sake of an ideal, especially when a man is young, or even when he is old, if he keeps his heart young within him, a faculty which is often rather an incident of the artistic temperament than a matter of personal effort. But sacrifice to the call of duty, a duty outside of the art ideals, represents a much higher quality, demanding the exercise of personal force and the maintenance of a quite unusual endurance; the quality, in fact, which one sums up as character.

This is one clew to the reading of George Fuller's life as an artist; that, at the call of what seemed to him to be his duty, he gave up the single-

aimed pursuit of the treasure where his heart lay; disregarded, as the world would say, the chances of a lifetime for the dull monotony of a life of arduous routine, and yet, despite the sacrifice, more probably because of it, found his ideal after all. But there is another clew. Fuller's ideal and his craving after artistic expression were bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh, an integral, inseparable part of himself. They did not need stimulating any more than a healthy appetite, were so normally a part of him as to preserve their natural functions under any circumstances of life. This is not the way in which artistic proclivities always reveal themselves. In some cases the art instinct is not dissimilar to a taste in waistcoats; double-breasted to-day, to-morrow, single; sprigged, plain, coloured, sober, to meet the occasions of the moment; put off as easily as put on; a habit rather than an instinct. This is the trivial, masquerading side of art, so detestable in a solid world of facts; a conscienceless sniffing of the air for change of fashion, that reminds one of the jackdaw with a few peacock feathers in his tail, strutting around and trying to deceive us into recognizing his superiority to fowls of ordinary degree. I doubt if the true artist ever humbled himself to proclaim his worth, and nothing more proclaims his worth than his beautiful humility. It was so, I am sure

we may believe, in Fuller's case. He was not even conscious of his power in the way that smaller men of less character are: only conscious of something that he longed to do and would do in time, if life were spared, notwithstanding the claims upon his attention of other and more mundane matters. The beauty of such a process of evolution is all from within: natural, like the bursting of the honeysuckle into fragrance and blossom over waste, dry places; not to be judged by what it might have been in other soil and climate, but fulfilling its special function of beauty through the inherent mystery of its own independent force.

The product of good New England stock, George Fuller was born at Deerfield, Mass., in 1822, his father being a farmer and his mother the daughter of a lawyer. At thirteen years he was taken to Boston and put first into a grocery and later into a shoe store, but only for a short time, soon returning to the home farm and resuming his studies at the country school. Already he had displayed a taste and aptitude for drawing. When fifteen, he joined an expedition to Illinois that was engaged in making surveys for the first railway in the state, and then again, after two years, returned to school at Deerfield. It soon became evident that the youth had more leanings

toward art than business, and he was allowed to accompany his half-brother Augustus, a deaf mute who painted miniatures, in a ramble through the smaller towns of New York State, executing portraits at fifteen dollars apiece. How much of simple romance there was in these beginnings: the early influence of the hill life, for Deerfield is a village among the hills; the wider freedom on the western prairies; and the roaming from place to place with paint box and wallet, light of heart and heel! All these influences tended toward independence, self-reliance, and wholesomeness of mind, to the natural and firm upbuilding of the individuality in himself, before he came in contact with influences directly artistic. He was fortunate, also, in his early friendship with artists of so fine a quality of mind and beautiful personal character as the sculptors Henry Kirke Brown and Thomas Ball. The former, eight years his senior, invited him to his studio in Albany, where he studied drawing for nine months, until Brown and his wife went to Europe. Then he spent the winters of 1842 and 1843 in Boston, returning to Deerfield each summer. In the latter year, having been elected a member of the Boston Artists' Association, he wrote to Brown, who was then in Rome, "I have concluded to see nature for myself, through the eye of no one else, and put my

trust in God, awaiting the result." It is just such simple-souled, reliant men who can possess their souls with patience and reach their end by waiting.

In these early days at Boston, during part of which he shared a studio with Thomas Ball, he was painting portraits; but in 1846, the year after his mother's death, he sold his first imaginative picture, "A Nun at Confession," to a patron in Pittsfield, Mass., for six dollars! In the following year he moved to New York at the solicitation of his friend Brown, who had returned home, eager to devote the experience he had gained abroad to the representation of American subjects in America. During the ten years which followed of study and work in New York, varied with visits to Philadelphia and the South, it is not difficult to trace the effect of Brown's influence upon his earnest friend. One result of it was to prepare the latter for his own visit to Europe; to open his understanding beforehand to the wonders that he was to see, and at the same time to habituate him to an attitude of study, which would enable him to receive the technical lessons of the various schools and their stimulus to the imagination without being lost in the wealth of impressions or unduly influenced by any one of them. The opportunity to visit Europe came in 1859, when, at an interval of only a few months, both his elder

brother and father died, so that the duty of caring for the farm and for those left dependent upon it fell to him. But before settling down he made a tour of five months, visiting London, — where he met Rossetti and Holman Hunt, — Paris, and the chief cities of Italy, Germany, Belgium, and Holland; making sketches in the galleries, and finding especial delight in Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese, Rubens, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Correggio, and Murillo, apparently with a particular admiration for the colourists.

An infinite pathos, we may feel, gathers over this visit, affording, as it did, a view of the Promised Land to a pilgrim whose steps were so peremptorily recalled to the hard routine of the far-off hill farm; a first meeting with the lady of his imagination in her full glory at the moment when he found himself compelled to forego entire allegiance; a brief vision of the ideal before setting his hand to the prosaic reality of life. Yet, perhaps, to feel this is to misread the nobility of Fuller's character. To him, we may believe, there was a fuller, more rounded comprehension of beauty in life, manifested simply in the living of it well with hands and back and brain as well as with the subtler forces of the imagination; that in this big organic beauty, the beauty of art might be a fly wheel, but still

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THE SIMPLE GATHERER.

By George Fuller.

was only a part of the beautiful whole. So what seems to us such a tremendous sacrifice, to him may have been assuaged by the satisfaction of having the method in which his life should be lived so clearly set before him; and in this reading of his mind one pays, perhaps, the most honourable tribute to his character.

For fifteen years no picture by him was seen at the exhibitions, and only a few intimate friends knew that he still painted in the intervals of farm labour; at first in one of the rooms of his home, and later in an old carriage house, converted into a studio. His subjects were elaborations of the sketches made in Europe, small landscapes, and portraits of his children, relatives, and friends; often never finished, sometimes destroyed because they did not reach what he desired. Meanwhile his work on the farm was successful; many improvements were carried out, and tobacco culture was introduced with good results, until the fall of prices in 1875. This forced him into bankruptcy and restored him to art. During the ensuing winter he finished twelve canvases, which were exhibited at Boston, meeting with hearty praise and a ready sale. In 1878 appeared at the exhibition of the National Academy "By the Wayside" and "The Turkey Pasture in Kentucky," followed in succeeding years by "The

Romany Girl," "And She was a Witch," "The Quadroon," and "Winifred Dysart." Being elected a member of the Society of American Artists, he sent to its exhibitions "Evening — Lorette, Canada," "Priscilla Fauntleroy," and "Nydia." Among his other works, exclusive of numerous portraits, especially of ladies and children, were "Psyche," "The Bird Catcher," "Girl and Calf," "Fedalma," and "Arethusa," the last named being his single example of the nude. But this rich aftermath of creative work was all too short, lasting only eight years, for George Fuller died after a brief illness in March, 1884. He was buried at Deerfield, and a few weeks later a memorial exhibition was held in Boston comprising 175 paintings: an almost complete *résumé* of what existed of his art work, produced through forty years. Two years later the house of Houghton, Mifflin & Co. published a sumptuous memorial volume, containing appreciations by W. D. Howells, Frank D. Millet, Thomas Ball, W. J. Stillman, and J. J. Enneking; a sonnet by Whittier, and engravings by Closson, Kruell, and Cole.

It is useless to speculate upon what might have been if Fuller's productivity had not been interrupted by those fifteen years upon the farm; but when he emerged from them it was with a style of painting very different from his early one.

That had been hard in outline, minute and careful in finish; now it was immersed in atmosphere, tenderly elusive, quietly luminous, a revery of colour, reticently harmonious. It was no longer the work of an observation intent upon the outer world, but the outpouring of his innermost spirit, mellowed, chastened, become contemplative by time. One may believe that the outer world had become more and more identified with the necessities of his life, from which he sought a refuge within himself in his own dreams of spiritual beauty. For the names of his pictures count as little as the subjects. In all his best, notably in the "Winifred Dysart," "Nydia," "The Quadroon," and in "The Romany Girl," especially that example of the latter owned by J. J. Enneking, he is not concerned with portraying the individual but a type, and in giving to it especially a significance of spirit, investing it in each case with phases of what he had learned to realize as the spiritual quality of rarest, subtlest beauty. How could the essential fragrance and indefinable loveliness of maiden innocence as it appealed to the matured sympathies of his advanced years be expressed otherwise than he had felt it, — veiled in the romance of shadowed light, a thing too rarely delicate for sharp, decisive handling? And yet beneath this tender suggestiveness of method, what

strong brush work is discernible! Not clever, truly, or facile and masterful; rather plodding, ay, tentative, as of compressed emotion striving patiently for expression. One has seen a dreamy, tender treatment of the female form, which had no such staunch underlying structure to support it, work which attracts by what we hastily style subtlety, and later find to be but an exquisite veneer to an unstable conception; the artistic affectation of men whose coarseness of character belies the exquisiteness, and, as one studies their pictures longer, leaves us unconvinced of their sincerity. But in the purity of Fuller's conceptions the man himself and his deliberate, habitual conviction are embodied.

It is a remarkable feature of Fuller's development that whereas in age he belonged to the earlier generation of American painters, he should have emerged from his fifteen years' retreat and unaided communing with himself more truly modern in feeling than the younger men who were then returning from Paris. By very different ways he had reached an ideal not dissimilar to Whistler's; not, to be sure, expressed with the latter's inimitable, because so personal, *finesse*, but alike in its devotion to the abstract and in realization of the correspondence between painting and music, and not so unlike in its method of expres-

sion, so reticent and mysterious. Fuller also anticipated the motives of the still younger man, such as Le Sidaner and Duhem, to whom the inherent spirituality of the landscape or figure is the absorbing search, which they seek to embody in terms as intangible as possible. Wrapt from all contact with the distractions of the art world, he had with the prescience of sincerity put forth his hand toward the most interesting phase of the latest movements. I mean the search for the significance of things, as of higher and more abiding value than the things themselves.

Fuller's life was a romance of more than usual human import, characterized by a singular unity of purpose. He is not to be considered, on the one hand as a man, and on the other as an artist, with qualities, as is not unusual, respectively dissimilar and conflicting. His art was of himself, truly an ingredient, nourished, disciplined, chastened, always sweetly wholesome, modest and noble, like his life. He lived the latter well, and in this high ideal of manhood realized the ideal of his art.

VIII

HOMER D. MARTIN

VIII

HOMER D. MARTIN

HOMER D. MARTIN has been called the first of American impressionists — doubtless not with reference to his manner of painting, but to the way in which he formulated his conception of the landscape. He was not concerned so much with its obvious phenomena as with the impression that it aroused in his own imagination.

The distinction is a very general one. Everywhere there are those to whom the obvious appeals with undisturbed frankness; they have an instinct for facts, and for confronting them singly and directly; always, too, there are others to whom the facts are but a basis of suggestion. A lamppost on the sidewalk implies another one beyond, still others farther on, and on and on; and, by inference, the endless footsteps in both directions, passing and repassing.

Martin's earliest study, as a young man at Albany, was with William Hart, a literalist of very engaging qualities. Hart was faithful to the forms of nature, as every true landscapist is, and

dwelt upon the details of the scene with a lingering appreciation that did not, however, prevent him from coördinating them into a very charming *ensemble*. But his joy in the latter was of the obvious kind, such as any intelligent lover of the country shares; a joy in the pleasantness of generous pastures, dotted with cattle, and pervaded with a quiet prosperity; in the smiling sunshine and grateful shade, in cosey woodland retreats, that a man might seek in order to bury himself in the attractions of a book. Always it was the domestic happiness of the country side that won him, much, indeed, as it won Daubigny; for such choice of subject is not a consequence of a painter's particular way of painting, but of his temperament. The much or little of suggestion that he receives from the landscape, the quality of personal feeling that he puts into his pictures, depend upon his character as a man; and the loyalty with which he follows his own true bias determines very largely the value of his work. Certainly this is a truism, and yet how often it is ignored; painters and amateurs establishing, each for himself, some particular basis of appreciation.

For example, to look for poetic quality in a landscape picture has become with many an axiom of standard, and they find its expression chiefly in the manner of tone. So they have

no eyes for one of Monet's naturalistic studies; its subtle fidelity to a phase of nature does not interest them. He has found the truth of nature to be enough for his own enjoyment, and as he has striven to make nature speak direct through his picture without any promptings to sentiment on his own part, they miss the suggestion of some special sentiment such as another painter will enforce, and find Monet unintelligible; much the same, presumably, as nature itself would be to them a sealed book. The text to them is unsuggestive; they need a commentator. And how scarce good commentators are! The vogue of poetic landscape has called into activity many whose sentiment is merest sentimentality; minor poets of the brush with a pretty knack of tone and tenderness that passes for poeticalness. It is necessary to clear the air of any such mild pretence of poetry before venturing to speak of Homer Martin as essentially the most poetic of all American landscape painters.

It has been said that there is a Homeric quality in his landscapes. Clearly this is no attempt to place him in relation to other painters, as we regard Homer among other poets; but is a reference to the big significance of his work, to those elemental qualities which we habitually associate with the poetry of Homer. The bigness of

Martin was principally that of a big intellect. It had its inner shrine, where he kept to himself the sacredness of his deepest artistic inspiration; an outer court, wherein he mingled with other men of intellect, and its sunny entrance steps, where, beyond the shadow of what was to him most real, he could prove himself to be "a fellow of infinite jest," a brilliant *raconteur*, one that all who knew him loved. And the love for Martin one finds to have been greatest among those who knew him best, and were most aware of the deeper qualities that underlay his wit and jollity.

There is, indeed, a rare attractiveness in this combination of depth and brilliant surface. It is so easy to take life seriously or hilariously, if one is formed that way; but to be big with seriousness in season, and big with sportiveness betimes, is the quality of an extra large-souled man. Of a man, indeed; for the quality is essentially a masculine one, and rare even among men, particularly in art, so large a portion of which is feminine in significance. I suppose most of us feel this in comparing, for example, Tennyson with Browning; and, consciously or unconsciously, have had a feeling of it in the presence of many pictures, even by acknowledged masters. Not improbably it is the latent reason of so much

indifference toward pictures in this country by persons otherwise cultivated. Our past history, as well as the immediate present, has demanded qualities essentially masculine, and so many people instinctively suspect the superabundance of the feminine in painting, or have regarded it merely as a pastime on the part of the painter, and as suitable chiefly for decorating the walls of a drawing-room. The one class has ignored the claims of painting; the other committed itself unreservedly to that kind of picture, which is least of all the product of intellect, or likely to make any demand upon the intelligence. They have found it difficult to take a painter and his work seriously, or would be, perhaps, surprised to find that such an attitude toward art could ever be expected of them. They would find incomprehensible the suggestion that a man may be found who puts into a picture as much mind and force of mind as another man puts into the upbuilding of a great business; that the qualities of mind expended in each case may be similar in degree, and not altogether different in kind; power to forecast the issue, and to labour strenuously for it, with a capacity for organization, for selecting, rejecting, and coördinating; a gift of distinguishing between essentials and non-essentials, and of converting sources of weakness into

strength, so that the issue becomes in each case a monument to the intellect of its creator. And when one finds, as with Martin, that these big qualities of mind have been directed to the expression of what is grand in nature, least transitory, most fundamental, one begins to have that respect for his art which must precede all true appreciation, and to discover that it has a close relation to what is noble and most endearing in life — a deep, abiding reality. During his lifetime comparatively few appreciated the significance of his work, but it is of the kind that time is justifying.

A very characteristic example is the "Westchester Hills," because it is at once so powerful and so free from any of the small and perfectly legitimate devices to attract attention; a picture that in its sobriety of mellow browns and whites (for such, very broadly speaking, is its colour scheme) makes no bid for popularity; in a gallery might escape the notice of a careless visitor, and grows upon one's comprehension only gradually. In the gathering gloom of twilight we are confronted with a country road crossed by a thread of water and bounded on the right by a rough stone wall. The road winds away from us, skirting the ridge of hill, which slumbers like some vast recumbent beast against the expanse of fading sky. The dim foreground and shadowed mass

From the collection of Daniel Guggenheim, Esq.

WESTCHESTER HILLS.
By Homer D. Martin.

are grandly modelled; strength, solidity, and bulk, contrasted with the tremulous throbbing of the light. This contrast of rude, tawny ground with the vibration of a white sky recalls a favourite theme of the French painter Pointelin; but one feels that a comparison of his pictures with the "Westchester Hills" is all in favour of the latter. Both painters have felt the solemn loneliness of nature folding her strength in sleep, the mystery of darkening and of the lingering spirituality above; but Martin is the grander draughtsman of the two, suggesting with far more convincingness the solid structure of the earth. So we are made to realize that the phenomenon is not merely one that he has noted or that we might note, but one that through countless ages has manifested itself as part of the order of the universe.

Its significance is elemental. We may attribute this to the better drawing, or, with far more justice, to the superiority of intellect, that could embrace this larger conception and find the means to express it. And in studying the means let us not overlook the essential grandeur of the colour; not of the brave or passionate kind, but sober with a concentration of subtle meaning, that discovers infinite expression in the minutest variations of the homely browns and yellows, which

in the shadow yield nothing but their strength and quietude. And, then, what a wonder of suggestion in the sky! It is not only lighted, but quivering with light; an elastic fluid that extends as far as one's imagination can travel, in height, and breadth, and depth. These limitless skies are a characteristic of Martin's pictures. He does not seem to have been attracted so much by cloud forms or to have been given, as it were, to building castles in the air; but his imagination loves to free itself in the far stretches of ether, the circumambient medium through which the waves of light travel. His skies are brushed in with firm assurance; it is a pleasure to peer into the canvas and study the sweep and exultation of the strokes, and then to step back until distance blends them into a unity of ranging grandeur. And just as Corot said of himself, that he was "like a lark pulsing forth its songs amid the gray clouds," and his skies have the vibrative quality of violin music, so there is music in these skies of Martin's, only it is that of the organ and the diapason stop. True, the note is not always so full and sonorous; as, for example, in the "View on the Seine" in the Metropolitan Museum, where the splendid blue and white have a more silvery resonance, which, however, is less suggestive of songfulness than of the sweep of music

From the collection of Louis Marshall, Esq.

THE SUN WORSHIPPERS.

By Homer D. Martin.

travelling on and on. Indeed, in all his skies, there is less of local significance than of the suggestion that the ether is a tidal ocean connecting the fragment of circumstance with infinity.

This landscape also shows that his imagination was not wedded to the solemn. It is brisk with the *joie de vivre*, and yet not in a merely sprightly way. In the line of poplars on the right of the picture, each spiring up into the sky, there is the sense of springing aspiration. Again, in that beautiful "Adirondack Scenery," with its waves of brilliant foliage rolling between the brow, on which we feel ourselves standing, and the distant cliffs of mountains, what exuberance of spiritual joy! Spiritual, indeed, for the picture was painted far away in the West, indoors, and under the affliction of failing health. But who would guess it from the picture? Martin had so possessed himself of the sweetness and majesty of the Adirondacks, that he could give out from himself, drawing upon the treasures of his memory. It was his swan song, and how characteristic of the essential nobility of the man, that it breathes such ample serenity, such a boundless sense of beauty, pure, spacious, and enduring! He never dwelt upon his troubles, as smaller men do; and this last picture is a grand assertion of the supremacy of mind over matter, — a poet's triumphant proof

that his dream of beauty was strong within him to the last.

Martin's work, like that of other great men, was uneven in quality. But if it lacks at times perfect intelligibility of construction or of form, it was not from want of knowledge or ability to draw, as is abundantly proved by the superlative excellence of these very qualities in his finest pictures. He had made countless studies, drawn with the greatest care, revealing a thorough feeling for and comprehension of form. At times, he may have found a difficulty in translating his knowledge into paint. His use of the brush, used as he needed to use it to express what he had in mind, had been necessarily self-acquired, and often it was rather the subtlety of the effect he desired to express than any fractiousness of the brush, which caused him to fumble, though, in the majority of his work, never sufficiently to distress us or to divert attention from the message that his picture conveys. For always, in his best pictures, there is this distinction of a message; not a mere friendly interchange of views between the painter and his friend, or simple, easy platitude regarding nature's beauty, but a deep, strong, personal assertion of some specific truth of beauty, fundamentally and enduringly true. It is the sort of message that appeals to the depth and

From the collection of Samuel Untermeyer, Esq.

OLD CHURCH IN NORMANDY.

By Homer D. Martin.

earnestness in ourselves; and with a comprehensiveness that permits each of us to draw from it what particularly satisfies himself, — qualities that are the unfailing distinction of the great works of imagination.

Some of his pictures, in which we shall find these qualities conspicuous, are "Normandy Church" and "Normandy Farm," painted during the years that he lived at Villerville and Honfleur, "The Sun Worshippers," "Autumn on the Susquehanna," "Sand Dunes, Lake Ontario," and "Headwaters of the Hudson." Individual preferences count for very little; but I cannot resist the pleasure of recording a particular fondness for the "Normandy Church" and "Sand Dunes." In the former it will be remembered how the roof and tower of the church, embrowned with centuries softened by moss and lichen, stand like an embodiment of stability against the quiet movement of fleecy clouds that cross the blue sky, like a token of faith and protection to the little cottage on the left. It is an idyl of the permanence of hope and consolation in a simple faith. Then what a full-lunged inspiration of rest and vastness does one draw from the "Sand Dunes"! It is not the vastness of distance, for the evening sky is wrapping with greenish gray the sand hillocks, which are separated from us

only by a belt of warm green-brown grass and a strip of golden-brown scrub. But it is the character of the scene that is vast in suggestion. We do not feel the sky to be a quilt of softness, but an abyss of tenderness, assuaging the desolation of the spot, — a desolation that has the feeling of primeval loneliness.

For, at the risk of repetition, I would dwell once more upon the elemental quality that characterizes all the best work of Homer Martin. Not only is his theme elevated and serious, clothed moreover in pictorial language of corresponding significance, but it shuns the trivial and transitory and attaches itself to what is basic in nature's beauty and perennially true. In his masterpieces there is the evidence of a great mind, for the time being unreservedly consecrated to great ends, and expressing itself in an imagery of grandeur and enduring suggestiveness. To recognize these qualities is to rank him highest of all the poet-painters of American landscape.

IX

GEORGE DE FOREST BRUSH

IX

GEORGE DE FOREST BRUSH

TO many a young student, regretfully turning his back on the few bright years of study in Paris, has come the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Hoping all things, believing all things of his single determination to succeed, he feels within him a capacity; but how shall he apply it? I fancy there are two classes of such aspirants: those who look around them for suggestion, and those who look within. Among the latter seems to have belonged George de Forest Brush.

Knowing him in the light of his later work, we may feel it one of the anomalies of art that his master in Paris should have been Gérôme. Yet looking back over our own lives, we realize that it was the element of character, the presence or lack of it in those with whom we came in close contact, that determined their influence upon us. And this quality of character was strong in Gérôme, — of all the more value to Brush because it was of a kind in many respects so dissimilar to

his own. He is something of a rebel, — I use the word in its most respectable sense — intellectually independent, prone to dissatisfaction with things as they are, unconventional, perhaps a little impractical and visionary, as rebels are apt to be, — qualities, all of them, that are facets of character. Gérôme, however, a conservative, addicted to rote and rule, with his scholarly devotion to semi-classicalism or, as some more severely style it, pseudo-classicalism; a cold precisionist, who would render the death of a Cæsar as accurately and dispassionately as a surgeon dissects a corpus — such a character would be a wholesome make-weight to a young romantic mind.

It would emphasize especially the need of knowledge and mastery of facts, encouraging the formation of a stable basis on which romance, if it were minded to push its head into the clouds, might at least have sure foundation for its feet. Certainly, one accomplishment that Brush brought back from Paris was a feeling for form, and another was a faculty of seizing upon the reality of things and of keeping close to facts. No doubt it is as a painter of ideas that he is significant; but do not let us overlook the point that all his work, especially the earlier examples, shows an appreciation of the actual. How much of this he owes to the influence of Gérôme it would be

hard to estimate; but even if this realization of the mental and artistic value of the actual is an element in his own character, the contact with this master must have done much to give it fibre. For the sense of actuality is communicable, while ideas are not only personal to their author, but inalienable. And how distressingly elusive, tame, and profitless in pictures are ideas unbased on actuality — the landscape, for example, that makes for sentiment without support of drawing and construction. In pictures of the human figure an inspired control of colour may fill us with enthusiasm, but cannot wholly stifle our regret if the drawing is inadequate; for the beauty of nature is the beauty of its forms and of the coloured raiment that clothes the forms without disguising them, while in the world of spiritual ideas the beauty depends upon their association with or analogy to the world of matter.

So let us recognize the value of the master's influence upon Brush. There was much that he had to unlearn as he pursued his own evolution, notably the sleek, hard, and dispassionate method of Gérôme's painting. But his brush work every painter of distinguished character must acquire gradually for himself, just as a writer, if he is an honest craftsman, will discover his own fashion of words, adjusting his method

of expression to what he is trying to express; the main thing, both for painter and writer, being to have something to say: something which is a part of the man's self and convictions. The method will grow to it.

Leaving Gérôme's studio, Brush, like other students, stood at the dividing ways. He might have cast his eye around him, noted what seemed to be the tendencies of the day in art, the "latest style," as the fashion-makers call it, and set to work to reproduce in New York the impressions aroused in Paris. Then, in time, he would have been among those who excuse their own lack of initiative with the lament that in our city there is no "art atmosphere."

In the sense they seem to mean it, the absence is not an unmitigated evil, for what is this "art atmosphere," when you search it closely? A little, perhaps, like Scotland, as characterized by a Scotchman, "The most beautiful country in the world to live out of." So it is well to know there are places where the art atmosphere abounds, that one may visit for a time with pleasure and profit; yet it is remarkable how the great painters, the men of force and character, whose minds push them on continually, live either outside of it or within it behind closed doors. The smallness inseparable from an art

atmosphere, the mutual admiration and amiable reciprocity of patting of backs, or worse, the "Bully, my boy!" to his face, and the "How he's missed it!" behind his back; the petty rivalries of little cliques that clutter of themselves across a café table, setting up little standards and gaining brief conspicuousness by repeating one another's efforts — this is not the sort of atmosphere that strong painters need to breathe. They would be stifled in it. They need, like Delacroix or Puvis de Chavannes, the ample privacy of their own inner life, or, like the Barbizon men, the large seclusion of nature. For such an atmosphere a painter of Brush's calibre would have no use.

He returned to this country; not to city life, but to the wide freedom of the western territories, and found inspiration for his imagination among the Indians. I know nothing of what impelled him; whether it were a survival of a boy's enthusiasm for the story of his country, or a suggestion received from the archæological associations of Gérôme's studio, or some happy chance of idea, seized upon and followed out; but the significant point is that, though fresh from Paris, or, shall we say? because of it, he found motives that attracted him in America. The older men had found them too, but many of the younger generation, returning from Europe, were pro-

claiming, and many do so still, that the conditions of America are unfavourable to pictorial motives. May it not be that the barrenness is in themselves? I am not speaking of the landscape painters, but the figure men. One of their laments is the lack of picturesque costumes. This same word "picturesqueness" has been the bane of painting for two hundred years, implying the necessity of certain formulated qualities in a landscape or figure, rendering it suitable for the purposes of a picture. Owing to this obsession, Corot was fifty years old and had paid three visits to Italy before he, poet though he was, could feel the suggestion of loveliness in the scenery of his native country. So one must not be too hard on others who are deaf to the calling of their environment. But let us give no quarter to picturesqueness. It is a discredited, discreditable evasion of the facts. The true painter sees pictures all around him or evokes them from his imagination; the world of matter or of spirit continually presents itself to him in pictorial fashion; it is only a journeyman who hunts for picturesque jobs.

It may be said that possibly it was just this picturesque quality in the Indians that attracted Brush. I cannot say; but had he penetrated no further than the unusualness of their costumes

and habits, as is the case with others, so far as I know, who have painted them, there were nothing to be said. But he has penetrated into the life and thought of the Indian, and, more than that, has re-created in his pictures something of the primeval world; its vast isolation, silence, mystery. He has found in these modern redmen a clue to their past and has created a series of picture-poems which have the lyric melody of Longfellow's "Hiawatha," an equal individuality and appeal to the imagination and a greater virility. Let me instance "Silence Broken" — a little glimpse of river, banked with dense foliage, out of which a goose has burst above an Indian in his canoe. It is a small picture, representing a contracted spot, but it needs very little imagination to make one feel that this fragment of seclusion is part of an immensity of solitariness. The man, kneeling as he plies the paddle, looks up in no wise startled, but with a grand composure that seems a part of the elemental suggestion of the scene. It is a work of powerful imagination, projecting itself upon the solemn spaciousness and mystery of the past.

Recall, too, another small canvas of big significance, "Mourning her Brave." Standing by her dead in the snow, high up on a mountain ledge, the woman utters her dirge to a leaden

sky. What emptiness and desolation of world without and spirit within! A breath of the ceaseless mystery of sorrow throbbing out of the void of time! Then a tenderer feeling pervades "The Sculptor and the King." Stroke by stroke the sculptor has compelled the marble to respond to his thought, or wooed it, for he has a gentle, dreamy face; a youth only dimly conscious of his desires, and he waits for the king's verdict, tremulously eager, and withal so glad in his heart at what his hands have found the skill to do; a poetic embodiment not only of the primitive man's yearning after expression, but of the springtime of every artist's soul. Then note the king, standing with folded arms, wrapping his doubt of the desirability of such things and, yet, his wonder and admiration of them in the convenient impenetrability of silence. There is a touch of humour in this figure, as of the critic non-plussed and unwilling to commit himself, but much more of serious reference to the early dawnings of a comprehension of the beautiful, as "a thing to be desired to make one wise."

Those Indian subjects are of a high order of imaginative work. They have a great power of suggestion, stirring directly and forcibly one's own imagination; and they are informed with an elevation of thought, a deeply penetrating earnestness

From the collection of Miss Henrietta E. Failing.

THE SCULPTOR AND THE KING.

By George de Forest Brush.

and a largeness of conception that has been able to grasp the big significances and to feel them in their relation to perennial truth. For they not only suggest the life and environment of the early redman, picturing both with a fulness of comprehension that brings them vividly to our consciousness, but they involve allusions to our own experience. There are periods of sorrow when the world seems very empty and desolate to-day; there still are yearnings after higher things, the flutterings of doubt and hope that precede the beginning of growth of something better; and still a grandeur in the solitude of nature and maybe in that of a man's own communings with himself. We may or may not have experienced those things, but, at least, we have an intuition of their possibility; and if a picture can recall the past and show it as part of the eternal relation of spirit and matter, we are justified in honouring its author. So these pictures of Brush's seem to me great, notwithstanding a certain smallness — I will not call it pettiness — in their execution. As I recall the "Mourning her Brave," it has considerable breadth of method, and, no doubt, others of the Indian series show increase of manual accomplishment. But the painting in "Silence Broken," still influenced by Gérôme's, is hard and shiny; and the drawing

in "The Sculptor and the King" has a quality of timorous and laboured exactness. It is not in consequence of style, but despite it, that they are impressive.

With the artist's personal development has come maturity of craftsmanship. His latest series of "Mother and Child" are marked by fluency of composition both in the lines and masses and in the colour schemes. But with the ripening of his powers has scarcely followed increase of individuality. He has freed himself from the hard, evenly lighted, rather tight character of Gérôme's manner only to yield himself to the fascination of the old Italian style. It is a little surprising that one whose imagination is so individual should have failed to discover a really personal language of expression. It would seem as if the lack of facility was beyond his power to remedy, and that, feeling the need of broadening his method, and conscious that breadth with him would mean chiefly a larger kind of precision, he had found in the example of some of the Italian masters just that union of qualities. Then, too, if he were searching for precedents it is to the dignity and quietude of the Florentines that such a temperament as his would turn. And in these later pictures one is conscious of these qualities. They have an air of noble sweetness, serenity, and high

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MOTHER AND CHILD.

By George de Forest Brush.

and earnest purpose, creating, wherever they appear, an atmosphere of their own, pure and elevating as that of the upper air. Yet, as creative work, I think many will rank them lower than the promise of his early days. Their motive is a borrowed one — borrowed with their technique. True, it is one of beautiful human significance, but its representation, especially to one who is a husband and a father, makes a comparatively small demand upon the imaginative faculties. So that, if we feel the evidence of these faculties in painting to be the rare and superlative thing, the artist's persistence upon a somewhat lower plane of endeavour must seem regretful. It is rather a merging of the artistic prepossession in the human.

And I wonder whether this may not be the explanation. In early manhood, while the impulse was from within, he sought the objective for it in the world outside, characteristically choosing those scenes which would least interfere with the seclusion of his own mind. In later years he has found the seclusion in his own home, yielding to the natural tendency, as the years grow upon one, to feel the world to be less and less, and those closest to one more and more. And, it must be remembered, the conditions of the world were never quite to his liking, while his home is

what he has made it and would have it. Yet this, after all, represents the evolution of a man rather than of the artist — a yielding to circumstances, inclinations, conveniences, rather than a following of one's star.

I write these words with hesitation, as it may be my own fault that I do not detect in these later works as much evidence of elevated imagination as in the Indian studies. If so, I would plead in extenuation my enthusiasm for those earlier pictures.

X

ALEXANDER H. WYANT

X

ALEXANDER H. WYANT

THERE is a species of ivy in England — I do not know if it exists in this country — that grows over old stone walls and towers. It is treelike in character and size. Probably it was never planted deliberately against the masonry, but reached its *habitat* by one of those romances of nature's accidents. Finding the support that its young life needed, it clung and mounted; gradually, however, gaining independent strength until in the maturity of its growth it has its own boughs, so hardy that a man may climb by them, and puts forth bunchy masses of leaves and berries that disguise the original support in a luxuriance of independent growth.

Such is often the story of an artist's development, and is that of Wyant's. In the small town of Defiance, in Ohio, where he lived, there was little to suggest to the boy what pictures meant, and yet he had the picture-making faculty in himself: the observant eye and desire to translate into line the forms of things. He drew in-

cessantly: the forms of stones, of banks, and tree roots, their stems and branches, and made studies of the leaves, separately and minutely, as well as in masses. I like to think of him as a child lying full length before the kitchen fire with a bit of burnt wood taken from it, drawing on the floor; and fancy that in that soft, suggestive medium of charcoal, and on the rough surface of his improvised panel, he may have got his first dim consciousness of the meaning of synthesis in landscape; the securing of character and tone, and the fascination of working in masses rather than in outline.

When he was old enough to be set to a trade, he was apprenticed to a harness maker, working in his leisure hours at sign painting. But all roads lead to Rome, and a youth might derive much skill in form, as well as breadth of manner, in this humble department of the fine arts. Somewhere about the fifties he found himself in Cincinnati, even then an oasis in the desert of western indifference to, or ignorance of, art. It was here, in a private collection, that he first discovered what painted pictures were like, and, with a rare instinct for one so young, it was Inness's work that captured his imagination. A youth, passionate and eager as Wyant was, must have his god or goddess; a being infinitely above him, yet, perhaps, of infinite condescen-

sion, who will listen to his devotion. Some of us may have offered our heart and future to ladies nearly old enough to be our mothers; Wyant's divinity was of the other sex, an Apollo at whose oracle he would inquire. He found the means to come to New York and lay his sketches before the master, and never forgot the kindly criticism which bid him be of good courage and persevere.

He was now about twenty years old, and nearly ten more years were to elapse before his own independent growth was to establish itself. Meanwhile its direction had been assured by the influence of Inness; its manner of growth was to be partly affected by the Norwegian painter, Hans Gude, who had graduated from Düsseldorf and was at this time working in Carlsruhe. He had been the pupil of Achenbach, who, as Muther says, had "taught him to approach the phenomena of nature boldly and realistically, and not to be afraid of a rich and soft scale of colour." He had felt the influence, also, of Schirmer, whose fondness for the so-called Italian landscape had guided him to the "acquisition of a certain large harmony and sense for style in the structure of his pictures." Such was Gude, to whom Wyant went for instruction. He spoke in after years of the kindness with which he had been received as almost one of the household by the painter and his good frau,

and one may imagine that the student took much profit from the master's emphasizing of form and construction, and also from the reposeful dignity, academic though it was, of his compositions. But when the older man passed from the teaching of principles to that of methods, and urged his pupil to imitate his particular manner of presenting the truths, Wyant's independence rebelled. He had learned what could properly be taught, and recognizing that for the rest he must depend upon himself, returned to New York.

Face to face with the problem of making a living, and hoping to gain useful experience, he joined a government exploring expedition to the West. But the party suffered terrible hardships, to which Wyant's physique succumbed. He was put upon the train to return East, and might have stopped at his mother's home to be nursed and cared for. And much he needed tending, for he was helpless, stricken with paralysis; but the mind in his poor body was still active; he argued that to be taken off at a far western station was to become stranded, to lose all touch with the painter's life, on which his determination was still fixed. So he let himself be carried past his home and reached New York. No words can add to the pathetic heroism of this decision. But in our admiration of the delicate poetry which belongs

From the collection of George A. Hearn, Esq.

THE MOHAWK VALLEY.

By Alexander H. Wyant.

From the collection of Samuel Untermeyer, Esq.

THE CONNECTICUT VALLEY.

By Alexander H. Wyant.

to the work of Wyant that we know best, let us not lose sight of the force of will-power that was involved in the making of it. "Yes, he had been in hell!" exclaims Carlyle of Dante; and while suffering may not be the only road to highest effort, it is one of them, and the man who passes along it like a man, even if he cannot tread it, but must be carried, as in Wyant's case, is very apt to produce something more than ordinarily appealing to the hearts of other men. While Wyant recovered the use of his body, though obliged ever after to paint with his left hand, he was never really free from some bodily discomfort; and I wonder whether this may not have had some influence upon his notable preference for depicting nature at the hush and restfulness of twilight. To one whose days were, more or less, days of weariness, constantly sensible of the afflictions of the body, with what a benediction the evening would come, full of spiritual refreshment! Out of the cool cisterns of the night his spirit would drink repose.

For many years he made his summer home in the Adirondacks; then, fearing that he was getting too much into a groove in his way of seeing nature, he transferred his study to the Catskills. The move is characteristic of his alert sensitiveness to nature's impressions. His temperament was like

an Æolian harp, delicately attuned to nature's breath, responsive to its faintest sigh; but he dreaded lest the melody might become too uniform, too much a merely passive expression. There was a similar mingling of purpose and of surrender in his relations with his fellows. To a few friends, among them always Inness, he gave a welcome, and no little of his time and means in constant acts of kindness to those who needed help; but from social or official functions he kept, as far as possible, clear. He had so much that in his heart he longed to do, had begun his life's work comparatively so late, and knew the years left to do it in were few. It was only by unremitting application that he could realize his ideal.

This concentration of endeavour affected his ideal, limiting the range of moods of nature that he strove to represent. Such versatility as Inness's and that painter's alacrity of impression to constantly differing phases of nature were impossible to his temperament and circumstances. Drawn by both to isolate himself, he heard in the silence of his own heart the still small voice of nature, listened for it always, and strove to woo it. The echo of it is felt, I think, in all his landscapes. We may recall some of his large woodland pictures, in which sturdy trees are gripping the rocks with their roots. Strength and stability

and the evidences of time confront us, just as they would in the forest itself; but like cathedral architecture when music is pulsing through it, they are for the moment secondary to the spiritual impression of the voice. Wyant heard it in the movement of the tree-tops, and in the stir of weeds and ferns that nestled in the hollows, and it whispered to him of peace, a quiescence that stirs the soul to gentle activity, gladsome by turns or subdued in the alternate sun and shadow, that inexhaustible mystery of nature's peace that passeth man's understanding. We have all felt it and know how far it is from our everyday lives, and we look to word-poets and to poet-painters to create an illusion of it. Surely no American painter has done this more irresistibly than Wyant. Nor is there wanting to the peace of his pictures at times a more solemn suggestion. While so many of his twilights breathe simply the ineffable loveliness of quiet, others are astir with persuasion to spiritual reflection, with the gentle admonition to sadness that itself is purifying, or with deeper, fuller suggestion of the infinite mystery of nature's recurring sleep that swallows up the littleness of man in its immensity. I remember, too, a little picture of darkened earth and rather turbulent dark sky in which a large boulder alone glistens in the fading light — a rock of illumination

and strength in the surrounding uncertainty of gathering night. Brimming over with the suggestion of an elevated melancholy sustained by faith, and painted with an extraordinary earnestness of simple and direct conviction, it seems like a symbol of Wyant's own art life.

But almost everything that he painted is expressive of some phase, at least, of himself. His work is more than ordinarily personal; perhaps, for the reason already mentioned, that he so deliberately concentrated his motives. And the quality of his poetry was lyrical. I have seen it called idyllic, but that is to miss its higher and deeper qualities. The idyl, Tennyson notwithstanding, is too much identified with the little pastoral poem, that breathes the simple gladsomeness of the meadows; but a more serious strain is interwoven with the gentleness and lovableness of Wyant's muse. He was passionately fond of music and, before his illness, could play the violin, not learnedly, but with true feeling. And the music of his painting is that of the violin; tenderly vibrating, searching home to one's heart, by turns lightsome, melancholy, caressing, impetuous, but with a tenderness in all. He did not play on many colours, but reaches a subtlety of tone, often as bewildering as it is soothing. The bewilderment will be aroused as much by his shadowed foregrounds as

From the collection of George A. Hearn, Esq.

MOONLIGHT AND FROST.

By Alexander H. Wyant.

by the faintly luminous sky. They defy analysis and are triumphs of impressionism. Impressionism of the true kind, I mean, pregnant with suggestion and divested of aught that would clog its directness; exhibiting, not knowledge, but the fruit of knowledge, and especially its tact of omission. To the careless and commonplace eye his landscapes have "nothing to them"; approached with a little understanding they mean so much, and the measure of their meaning is the technical knowledge involved. If there were any doubt of this, it could be disposed of by an examination of his earlier work, in which he lets one into the secret of his love of form and construction. Admirably sure and full of character is the drawing of the ground and its features, bit by bit receiving its due share of individuality; so also with the trees and their anatomy of trunk and branches, and with the structure of the sky. Everything has been studied, so that later out of the abundance of his technical skill he could be significantly spontaneous. Yet increase of facility did not lessen the self-exacting conscientiousness of his work. Some of his most impressionistic pictures were the result of trying to reach a fuller exactness of expression; when, finding confusion growing, he would seize another canvas and return to the simplicity of his original thought and let it

form itself. Few painters are better represented in their extant works. The fumbled canvas, or the one that, however sketchily, did not attain to his intention, never left the studio, and after his death, Mrs. Wyant, with a fine regard for his memory and with honour to herself, destroyed them. So the real Wyants — for I am told there are sham ones on the market — are invariably worthy.

So truly did he retain the spirit of the student that it was not until a little before his death that he allowed himself to feel that he had mastered the grammar of his technique. Then, with the consciousness of his end before him, he would exclaim, "Had I but five years more in which to paint, even one year, I think I could do the thing that I long to." Brave, modest soul! What he might then have done we shall never know; but what he did do we know to be very good. For another nature poet of our race, of like simplicity and singleness of love for nature, of as choice and elevated a spirit, and as lyrical in expression, we must go back to Wordsworth, who also in his communings with nature found her message —

> "Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love, and hope,
> And melancholy fear subdued by faith,
> Of blessed consolations in distress,
> Of moral strength and intellectual power,
> Of joy in widest commonalty spread."

XI

DWIGHT W. TRYON

XI

DWIGHT W. TRYON

IF we wished to introduce a foreigner to what is most distinctively American in our painting, we should show him, I think, the work of some of our marine and landscape painters. He would be least likely in these to detect the influence of Europe. The point of view he would recognize, no doubt, as the one common to all nature students since the Dutchmen of the seventeenth century; but in regard to the technique he could not attribute its character to the influence of this or the other master abroad, for our landscape painters, like most other true students of nature, have found, each for himself, their own necessary and inevitable language of expression. Necessary because it originated in their own peculiar need, and inevitable because it grew out of the particular character of the portion of nature that they studied. And in most cases it is some phase of the American landscape that has engaged the American painter, which accounts in no slight degree for the individuality of his work.

For do we pay enough heed to the essential differences that nature presents in different localities? At the moment I am not thinking of the variations in construction, forms, and configuration, as, for example, between the aspects of mountains and of simple pastoral regions, nor even of the separateness of impress set upon the landscape by man in the character of his buildings or of his farming occupations, but of that more subtle difference produced by varying kinds of atmosphere. The great landscape painters, we may have noticed, all belong to northern countries, who have lived, comparatively speaking, within the same degrees of latitude; and yet the landscapes of Holland, France, Scotland, England, Norway, and America can never be mistaken for one another. Apart from local conditions of man's handiwork, each varies in the local quality of its atmosphere — its degree of clarity or humidity, of briskness or caressingness.

In a country vast as ours, there must needs be diversity in different parts, so there cannot be any one character of landscape distinctively American; but, in their faithful rendering of the local character, all may be distinguishable from those of other countries. And this expression on the countenance of nature is not unlike that on the face of a man or woman; the painter may suggest

it perfunctorily, or he may render it with a completeness of sympathy and understanding, products of alert sensibility and interested acquaintanceship. It is the evidence of these qualities that gives enduring charm to Tryon's landscapes.

No one who knows his work will need to be told that he is a New Englander. His landscapes show an intimacy of knowledge of that locality, and an affectionate sympathy with its particular phases of expression, that could only result from the painter having grown up in that part, the boy's associations gradually maturing into the man's convictions. His home was in Hartford, Conn., where he was born in 1849. He entered upon life as a stationer's assistant, and pursued the occupation until he had accumulated sufficient means to visit Paris, all the while spending his leisure time in studying from nature and in discovering for himself how to represent his ideas in paint. There is evidence in this of sanity as well as earnestness, of a fine poise of character, qualities later to appear in his landscapes.

Above all, there is the perfectly natural process of a painter's evolution; I mean, the antecedent love of nature, the clear apprehension of the kind of nature that he aimed to paint, the love of it and the knowledge preceding the final acquisition of technique; meanwhile, the gradual upbuilding

of personal character by the discipline of postponing his ideals. So, when he reached Paris, it was not as a raw, enthusiastic student whose subsequent career spun suspended upon a mere cobweb of his fancy. He had married, and took his wife with him, establishing a little home and having clear plans in view, being, in fact, a man. He painted under Harpignies and Daubigny, an excellent combination of influences, mutually complementary: the one so sound and methodical, if a little prosaic; the other so captivating in the perennial boyishness of his mind, so lovable a student of the simple loveliness of rural scenes. What a happy antidote was Daubigny to the excessive earnestness of a typical New England character; how persuasively suggestive must his landscapes have been to one whose heart was implanted in the austerer charms of his New England home. The influence of his two masters served on the one hand to send the roots of his growth farther down and to stiffen the trunk, and on the other to encourage a more abundant leafage and the added fragrance of blossom. From both, also, he must have gained a store of technical principles; but of direct influence in his manner of painting there is no trace. His own special problem was one different from theirs, and he had to find his own way of solving it.

Even in one of his earliest landscapes painted about 1881, after his return from Paris, from studies made abroad, there is a decisively individual note. It is a scene of ploughing, owned by Mr. Montross — a stretch of dark rich soil, with man and horses pushing the furrow toward a clear, cool horizon. There is a larger feeling than Daubigny would have portrayed; a sterner one, if you will, certainly one more bracing in its suggestion of vigorous earth and breezy sky, and more distinctly inspired than Harpignies could have made it, with the sentiment of the soil and sky in their relation to the life of man. Still, the motive of the picture is so far a borrowed one that, although it has the feeling of a New England scene, it has not its local characteristics of atmosphere or of soil colour, lacking the more sensitive quality of the one, and the tenderer hues of the other. While, then, this picture is without the subtle qualities that mark the later ones, it has a clear, strong note of vigorous earnestness, strongly felt and strongly realized. Indeed, it seems entirely characteristic of the strength of purpose and sturdy qualities which are the foundation of Tryon's equipment, both as a man and a painter. He seems to have grown up with the smell of the soil in his nostrils as Millet did, though without the latter's saddened associations;

to have been nourished with the brisk New England air, and to have gathered muscle over its ploughed and grassy uplands. The keen stimulus of nature went through and through him early and has stayed with him, so that his art partakes of its strength. In his pictures, one finds, I think, a stronger foundation than only that of good drawing and construction; an earnest, wholesome delight in the strength of nature as being something in which he himself shares; which, indeed, has so grown into his mind and life that its expression in his work is but a matter of course. It is a part of his most serious convictions, so that his rendering of it is convincing.

Put into words, the distinction may seem a little fine drawn; but I feel sure that our experience of pictures gives it substance. How often, for example, in the work of the French classicists we may see illustrations of human vigour, on which good drawing and construction have been expended, and yet their suggestion of vigour is only an affectation; a quality aimed at by the painter, but not vitalized by strong, earnest convictions of his own. What a protestation of strength there is in Salvator Rosa's landscapes, and how little real convincingness! And, coming to the landscapes of our own time, it would be easy to quote examples of strong drawing and construction from which,

From the collection of Charles L. Freer, Esq.

SPRING BLOSSOMS.

By Dwight W. Tryon.

however, the spirit of strength is lacking. They are the work of men who mean strongly, but are not themselves strong men. So surely does personal character, or lack of it, show in a painter's work, not the mere robustiousness of personal force, but the settled, earnest, habitual convictions that are the elements of character. And quite as evident to our experience in pictures is the distinction between the real and the false in refinement. Mere subtlety of brush work, while it may create for a while an illusion of refinement, will not satisfy us in the long run.

Many of Tryon's landscapes reach a pitch of delicate suggestion in the rendering of soft air, caressing atmosphere, and shrouded light that is unsurpassed by any painter in this country; for the impression is much deeper than that of an entrancing skill in the management of the pigments. The spirit of the landscape stole into his heart when a boy, and has abided with him in his manhood; he is so much a child of New England, sweetened by its tenderer influences as well as nurtured on its hardihood, that, sharing its strength and refinement, he gives expression to himself when he reproduces these qualities in his pictures. Hence, in both directions, their complete convincingness. A fact, too, which helps to justify this appreciation is that his pictures

show an interest in so many moods of the landscape, and the degree of force or of subtlety with which he renders each is regulated by the demand of the occasion. You cannot divide the past twenty years of his productiveness into special periods of style; any attempt to do so will bring you up against the insurmountable objection of finding that two canvases of very different feeling and manner of painting are dated the same year. Development, necessarily, there has been in style; increased acquisition of facility and the power to render more penetratingly the mood of nature he is studying. But evolution of motive you will scarcely find. That from the first has been realistic; in the sense that the landscape, as it appears to him to be, affords primarily sufficient incentive to his study.

In the presence of nature he makes studies, intent for the time being solely on recording what he sees; later, in his New York studio, the poetic suggestion of these studies will come to him, and he composes a picture. But the process is from realism to poetry, and not contrariwise, as one suspects to be the case in the poetical landscapes of some painters. Tryon's way is not unlike a man's regard for a good mother. In the days of his habitual intercourse with her, it is her dignity and sweetness that

grow into his life, the changes of expression in her face and voice that win upon his devotion, her beautiful reasonableness that is accepted as quite a natural thing. It is only when the son's life is drawn apart from the habit of her presence that the sentiment of a mother's love is realized. So Tryon's withdrawals to city life allow the poetry of nature to steal in upon his imagination; when he resumes his face-to-face communing with it, the life habit of absorbed regard comes back to him. The result of this is that the sentiment of his pictures grows out of the actual, and represents the soul of a fact. One finds one's self admiring the extraordinary truth of the visual impression, and then often surprised that material so homely should yield such abundance of poetic suggestion; forgetting, for the moment, that poetry is not an element of nature, but a quality of the painter's mind, representing the degree of sincerity and elevation of purpose with which he has approached his subject. Tryon's poetry comes of the associations garnered through a life of affectionate intimacy with the country of his birth. It is as true and spontaneous as filial love.

His technical skill has secured the respect and admiration of his fellow-painters. They assign him that final title of approval, "a painter's

painter;" meaning that only those who know by practical experience the difficulties and trials of technique can properly appreciate his ability and resourcefulness, and certainly not implying, as is sometimes the case when this expression is used, that the admirable qualities in the picture are primarily and solely technical ones.

Attempting in non-painter language to summarize the spirit of his method, one may, perhaps, reduce it to the equivalent elements in his own character — poise and sympathetic penetration. The balanced effect of his landscapes is very notable: a harmony of colour in which there is no jar, a similar equipoise in the details introduced, a delicate adjustment of strength and tenderness and of sentiment to facts; an *ensemble* of uninterrupted unity. In the matter of sympathetic penetration — a rather clumsy expression for which I can find no happy alternative — his method is even more remarkable. I allude to the affectionate studiousness with which he analyzes the significant constituents of the landscape, and to the degree in which his eye penetrates the secret of the envelope of atmosphere, of that particular quality of atmosphere characteristic of New England.

I would cite the "Early Spring, New England," not as an example of one of his most beautiful

From the collection of Charles L. Freer, Esq.

EARLY SPRING, NEW ENGLAND.

By Dwight W. Tryon.

landscapes, but as a triumph of technical resource, to which was awarded the gold medal in 1898 at the Carnegie exhibition in Pittsburg. The foreground is a pasture with a brook winding through it, and several leafless trees which spread their delicate network of branches against a clear, open sky that reddens slightly near the horizon. Beyond is cultivated land, partly covered with the brilliant green of young vegetation, and partly red, upturned soil, with a team ploughing. Farther back are gently rising hills.

The front of the picture is painted with remarkably delicate detail, and in the distant parts there is a similar suggestion conveyed of the worthiness of the scene to be minutely studied. There is not a square inch in the composition that is without individual interest, and yet this elaborate mosaic unifies into a single impression of spaciousness; for the relative significance of each plane in the picture has been so shrewdly realized. The eye is invited to travel back to the remotest part of the ground and up into the expanse of sky. This is the primary invitation of the picture as would be that of the actual scene; and then follows, if you have eyes for it, the beckoning in this and that direction to the separate interest of the various parts. This accurate rendering of the effect of intervening atmosphere upon the reced-

ing forms and colours brings the atmosphere itself into the picture; a softly stealing animation, not yet nimble, but gently quickening into life. It is, indeed, a picture of quite extraordinary subtlety; and so much the more a triumph of accomplishment because it is a very large one, and the mere problem of filling such an extent of canvas with the evidences of minute observation, so that it should still hold well together, was a most formidable one. There was no possibility of evasion or of falling back upon convenient generalizations: the problem, once grasped, had to be solved to its ultimate conclusion.

Yet the very magnitude of canvas and of problem impairs somewhat the intimacy of feeling in the picture, and for all its abounding skill we shall not reckon it among Tryon's choicest work. In that he gives us, when he wills, the sense of spaciousness within a much smaller frame, and, compassing it around so discreetly, makes its subtle appeal by so much the more insinuating. These comparatively smaller pictures are too numerous and different in character to allow of detailed allusion, yet one may single out a few such gems as "The Rising Moon" and "Sunrise," owned by Mr. Charles L. Freer; "After Showers — June," owned by Colonel Frank J. Hecker; "The Meadow — Evening," owned by Mr. A. T. Sanders; "Springtime," owned by Mr. George

From the collection of J. J. Albright, Esq.

EVENING — AUTUMN.

By Dwight W. Tryon.

A. Hearn; and a "Winter Evening" and "Early Spring," the property of Mr. N. E. Montross.

These are masterpieces, — and the list is incomplete, — pictures that you may study from the strictest standpoint of technical excellence, and that exert an influence upon the imagination which one may believe will be felt by those who come after us as fully as by ourselves.

In considering American landscapes, there is more than a little tendency to dwell upon the names of the painters who are dead, regardless of the fact that the traditions which they established are being maintained. Among those who are maintaining them, Tryon is conspicuous, and in a way that is, perhaps, more distinctive than theirs. He represents much more closely the kind of contribution that the American temperament may be expected to make to the progress of painting. For unless painting can continue to reflect the evolution of human progress, it is, after all, only a "dead language." But it is landscapes such as Tryon's that prove its vitality. They represent the combination of qualities that differentiate American civilization in its worthiest form from that of other countries and of past times. They combine a largeness of outlook with alert sensibility to impressions; being, at once, big in character and minutely subtle.

XII

HORATIO WALKER

HORATIO WALKER

UPON his first appearance last year as a contributor to the exhibition of the British Institute of Water Colours, Horatio Walker's picture, "The Potato Pickers," was prominently hung, and he himself was elected a member. Considering the fine record of the Institute and its high rank among water colour societies, such instant recognition of a newcomer was very notable.

But it is just the way in which an artist of Walker's calibre is likely to make his impression — at once and authoritatively; for he is a painter of unusual personal force, and of a persuasiveness quite as remarkable, qualities not always found in combination, but, when united, irresistible. And these artistic qualities are the counterparts of similar elements in his character as a man. His is a forceful personality of moral as well as mental force. How much this means! There is a kind of forceful person who slaps you on the back in the street, and you probably consider him a nuisance; and there is a kind of painter who would

violently arrest your attention by the bravery of his brush strokes or some surprising crash of colour scheme or chiaroscuro.

In such forcefulness there is a certain effrontery that one resents at once; or which, if it arouse a little momentary curiosity or even interest, will in the long run be followed by intolerable weariness. For it is almost entirely a mere display of manual gymnastics, an exploitation of self. There may be a little mind behind it, but it will be the quality of mind that is simply of the active kind, enamoured of its own activity. It is not regulated by the moral sense, responsible to self-control, contributory to some serious and absorbing purpose, involving a realization of the intense meaningfulness of nature and life. This is the foundation quality of what is big in life and art: a noble seriousness that penetrates the facts, and lifts them upon the elevation of its own spirit to the dignity of what is grandest and most abiding in the universal scheme.

Painters who possess this faculty are apt to concentrate their sympathy and force upon some particular phase of life, and Walker has found the pivot point for his in the island of Orleans, in the St. Lawrence, some twenty miles northeast of Quebec. Here the descendants of the early French settlers still retain the simple faith and

habits and fine ingenuousness of the peasants of northern France; a sturdy race, close to the soil, and drawing dignity as well as nourishment therefrom, perpetuating their origin even in their belongings: the domestic utensils, the farm implements, in the racial characteristics of their clever little horses and oxen, and in the very fashioning of their harness. Nor was the singling out of this Acadia merely the happy discovery of a painter in search of the picturesque. It was a harking back to the associations of his boyhood; for, though Walker's later youth was spent in Rochester, N.Y., he is a Canadian by birth, the son of an English army officer.

It is a beautiful thing for an artist when he can thus graft his maturity on to the roots of his early impressions.

> "A boy's will is the wind's will,
> And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

How often the will passes, we know not whither, like the wind; and the thoughts, swallowed up in the materialism of far other thoughts, come back to us in later life only as random visions of what might have been! Indeed, it is beautiful for the artist when he can recover that boy's will, and link the early thoughts on to the maturer thoughts of manhood. This way lie sincerity, depth and ful-

ness of conviction, and ripest fruitfulness. It has been difficult for American artists to maintain this continuity of evolution, since they have had to travel far for instruction, and the way of return to the associations of the past has not seemed clear. Still, many have found it, and perhaps a volume of criticism might be based upon this one fact; and it might be shown that those whom we most admire as powerful painters, for the reality of what they have to say and their impressive way of saying it, are the ones who, in their art, have got back closest, either to the actual scenes or to the mental associations of their youth.

But besides the quality of force in Walker and his art, there is the other one of persuasiveness. You may remember his "Oxen Drinking," — the two broad-fronted, patient heads side by side at the water trough, their driver, in blue shirt, standing by them, and the rich brown backs of the massive beasts showing against the dark-gray horizon. For the sky, reaching far up above the group, has been whipped into turbulence by the wind; it is slaty-hued, threatening storm. How grandiose this elemental fermentation! How significant the bulk and solidity of the beasts! There is force all through the picture, the force of disturbance and the force of immobility; for the beasts are grounded like boulders; the man, motionless.

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A STY.

By Horatio Walker.

It is a force that compels attention and communicates its own strength to one's self; and then succeeds an infinite suggestion of restfulness. The heavens may labour, but for man and oxen the appointed task is done, and they enter into their rest. And note that this suggestion is not arrived at by a process of the intellect, but by pure sensation.

It is the colour scheme that conveys it; that note of blue, so clear and flute-like, against the sullen grayness of the sky; the sobering, complementary note of tawny brown, even the chromatic variations of the gray sky that vibrate like music. For all its menace, the sky is beautiful, and in union with the other notes of the scheme produces a throbbing tenderness of harmony that is irresistibly appealing. It is through his colour schemes that Walker tempers his force with persuasiveness. For he is one of that small band to whom colour is as essential a part of their expression as notes are to the singer. You may see pictures in which the colour is little more than tints to differentiate the objects; others in which it is merely an accurate rendering of the phenomena studied; then others, again, wherein the colour is as inseparable from the conception as fragrance from the rose. It is essential, interpenetrating the structure of the picture, complete and indivisible as the compo-

nents of a passage in music; structurally, æsthetically, and intellectually essential. While one will find this true feeling for colour in all his work, it is only in the later ones, as one would expect, that it reaches its fullest subtlety of expression.

One of his early pictures is the "Milking," a large canvas to which was awarded the gold medal, by the vote of exhibitors, at the exhibition of the American Art Association in 1887. The scene is a stable interior, with drab walls, in which a woman in a blue gown is milking a black and white cow, whose calf is standing near. The light enters by a window on the right, and percolates through the dim recesses of the stable. At first one is conscious of the quiet beast standing across the picture, turning its mild head toward us, and of the woman in half shadow, a strong-bodied form in the easy attitude of a habitual occupation; but by degrees the eye penetrates the surrounding gloom, and discovers another figure and other objects in the background. In this gradual evolving of the subject, art has followed nature, and one feels also the evidence of a dignified reserve, as of a man who does not wear his heart upon his sleeve or admit you hurriedly into the privacy of his thought, but assures himself first of your sympathy and then bit by bit unfolds to you his purpose. Another characteristic of this

picture is its grandiose passivity, its suggestion of a liberal acquiescence in nature's plan. We shall find this same large outlook, under various guises, in a great number of Walker's pictures. Represented most differently, one meets with it in "Morning," in which a flock of sheep have just emerged from a shed and are beginning to nose about the meadow, which stretches behind them, glistening with dew and bounded by a coppice of delicately branched trees, through which the morning sky, just quickening with light, is visible.

Here again is a suggestion of the routine in nature's scheme: the awakening of day, the following on of the beasts to play their appointed part. And I think we shall be conscious also, for this is a later picture, penetrated with subtlety of manner and meaning, of an extraordinary suggestion of the remoteness of nature at this silent, undisturbed hour. It is a repetition of an occurrence as old as any time we wot of, and it links this modern scene in our imagination with Virgil's "Eclogues," with Homer's "Odyssey" and the Hebrew Laban's flocks, forming a link in the endless chain of pastoral recollection, at once the most enduring and most lovable of all our impressions of nature. Nor let us omit to notice the remarkable technical skill involved in

the painting of this stretch of meadow, the exquisite gradations of tone in the silvered greens as they recede from the eye, the delicate stir of animation in the grass, and also in the painting of the sky, which is kept so surely behind the trees, while its gathering volume of light steals gently through them. So complete is the unity of the picture, so musical its vibration, that from the whole scene there seems to exhale a delicate sigh that floats through the fragrant soundlessness of awakening nature.

Such technical accomplishment is the outcome of Walker's penetrating earnestness. Like most of the best landscape painters of every country, he is entirely self-taught. The appeal of nature, to one who is a true lover of it, is so personal that no other man's method will avail to express what he feels. He is compelled to discover his own way of utterance, conforming in its individuality to the particular quality of his sincerity. With Walker the sincerity is characterized not only by a determination to reach the truth, but by an instinct for the larger kinds of truth, those which need no enforcing, but make their own significance slowly and surely recognized. Nothing is more conspicuous in his best work than the reserve with which everything is stated. He puts forth his strength with calculated orderliness,

gradually letting one into the heart of his meaning, continually stimulating and rewarding by further study, and leaving one at last with the consciousness that he has held back part of what he had in mind. He leads one, indeed, to the dim border land where one says good-by to facts and yields only to the imagination. In this respect he is nearer to Israels than to Millet in his attitude toward peasant life. The peasant of Gruchy was so profoundly impressed with the pitifulness of the peasant's life that his story of labour with all its force is a restricted one. He missed its nobler aspect in relation to the universal scheme, and feels only its heavy fatalism. Israels has a wider sympathy, which can discover beauty in the monotonous routine, the beauty of little observances well and faithfully done, and the quiet intervals of rest and homely joy that intervene. But while Walker is akin to the Dutch artist in the embracing tenderness of his vision, he excels him in breadth and force. Israels continually invites you to look in; Walker, to look in also, but to look around as well.

In this respect he reminds one of Troyon, whose magnificent landscapes and grand cattle are big with nature's fecundity and strength. There is not a little of these two men in Walker; of Israels' tenderness and Troyon's breadth. Even

in so stirring a subject as the large "Ploughing in Acadia," painted about 1887, there is this infusion of tenderness. The three horses straining abreast are full of vigour; they tug with a sustained effort in which the continuity of the movement is finely expressed; the high gear above their saddles, covered with sheepskin, tosses in the air over their shaggy arched necks; the old man at the plough tail is stocky and hale; lusty green weeds have their roots in the strong earth, and the sky is full of bracing weather. Through and through it is a sturdy picture; but note, also, the affectionateness with which the head of the nearest horse is rendered. He is of the Normandy breed, the most willing of servants, the most intelligent of animal companions. His eye is bright, the nostril inflated; he is rejoicing in his strength; and later on, when labour is over, he will nose into his master's jacket and both will feel like friends to one another. This is the wholesome, natural view of the peasant's labour, when it is really close to the soil and uncorrupted by a cheap press; man and the animals going about their appointed task until the day is done, and finding companionship with one another and with nature; and it is not without a quiet happiness of its own.

This ploughing scene reminds me of a later one, painted a few years ago, of two oxen coming up

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PLOUGHING IN ACADIA.

By Horatio Walker.

the furrow with their massive, leisurely movement, while behind them the light is mounting up in floods of crimson, that overflow upon the broad backs of the beasts and lap the cool, glistening earth. It represents the first moments in nature's daily awakening to life and in man's daily routine of labour. Both in the sky and on the earth there is the steady gathering of force; not a burst of energy, but that massing of energy that will not readily expend itself. I have heard it remarked that the oxen look tired already, and the men likewise; but perhaps it is rather a passivity of feeling that is conveyed, that slow, unquestioning resignation, that is at once so pathetic and heroic in the true peasant.

And in another way many of these canvases of Walker's involve this heroic suggestion. While close studies of pastoral and agricultural life in a portion of this continent to-day, they have a more universal significance and set one's imagination back in the Old World that we call Homeric; times of spaciousness and simplicity, when we fancy that man's strength was in closest affinity with nature's; times of wholesomeness and poise of mind and body, when man lived by nature's rule, and labour was loving.

This universal suggestion is the product of the force, united with persuasiveness, that one marked

at the outset as characteristic of Walker and his work. It comes of the large seriousness with which he thinks and works, of the true perspective through which he views his subject, wherein facts and sentiment take their due place not only in the foreground, but in their relation to a distant horizon. These risings and settings of the sun, that he loves so much, have run their course through ages; not a little of his love for them no doubt is due to their suggestion of infinity in relation to the life of man; and that life, too, he prefers to view as itself a heritage of the ages.

For many of us life is now a complicated affair, with much whirring of human machinery within ourselves and around us; yet it still has elemental facts and emotions. The painter who can express these with their personal, local significance, and show, as well, their relation to the universal, is one whose work will be likely to endure.

XIII

GILBERT STUART

XIII

GILBERT STUART

"ANOTHER King arose which knew not Joseph," and so it goes still. Most American children are familiar with the so-called "Athenæum Portrait of George Washington," yet probably very few, even of their parents, know the name of the artist, Gilbert Stuart. We have got into the habit of dating the growth of modern American painting from 1875, and with some reasonableness, for that was the period at which students began to arrive home from Munich and Paris in sufficient numbers to make their arrival felt. Yet twenty-five years earlier, about the time that George Inness was starting for Europe, William M. Hunt had returned, bringing with him pictures of the Barbizon painters and introducing their principles of nature study. We are apt to dismiss the painting of the previous half-century as representing only the draggled ends of the English influence rudely severed by the Revolution; forgetting that the period is linked on to the Augustan age of English painting, to Rey-

nolds, Gainsborough, and the somewhat later Constable. For Gilbert Stuart was a contemporary of all three, and to some extent a rival of Reynolds, even in London, and was born also within the lifetime of the first of the great Englishmen, William Hogarth. Stuart, moreover, was not a follower of others, but a distinct and forceful individuality that played a leading rôle in the stirring drama of his times. He was, with little doubt, the first of American masters of painting.

There is a romance in every life, however gray and level, but in Stuart's the romance foamed upon the surface. Perhaps he had inherited it; for his father, a native of Perth, in Scotland, reached this country shortly after the battle of Culloden Moor, that shattered the prospects of the Pretender; and there is more than a suspicion that his espousal of a lost cause had made it well to put the ocean between himself and his past. However that may be, he built himself a little mill with a gambrel roof, at the head of the Petaquamscott Pond, in Narragansett county, R.I., and settled down to the quiet occupation of grinding snuff. He had married, and in 1755, after several other children, came a boy, who received the name of his father, and was duly entered in the baptismal registry as "son of the snuff grinder." But in time the mill proved un-

profitable, and the family migrated to Newport, where the mother superintended the boy's education, the Rev. Mr. Bissert instructing him in Latin. He seems to have been quick at learning but averse to study, being of a frolicsome disposition and addicted also to drawing. None remains of Stuart's early sketches, but one day some of them were seen by Dr. William Hunter, as he was paying a professional visit to the family. The kind and discriminating physician invited the boy to call upon him, and when he came presented to him a box of paints and brushes, — a day of days in the child's life, to be marked with red, and to be looked back upon in the after years with thanksgiving.

What a pretty picture it presents of those brave old colonial days, when simplicity and culture went hand in hand. It is very sad, of course, that the poor boy should have lived too early to enjoy the blessings of a school system, based on the strictest principles of pedagogy, graded to an average not inconveniently high, making much of words and relegating ideas to the proper limbo of things that are unpractical and, therefore, useless. How pathetic, too, the unique event of this paint-box in view of the profusion of presents which our children now enjoy! Truly, there is much room for complacent congratulation over improved

conditions. Yet it is a little disconcerting to notice how much the less favoured children made of their meagre opportunities; and we may begin to wonder whether education — the leading of the child step by step to a fuller and fuller consciousness of the realities of life — and instruction — the laying of brick upon brick to build an edifice of character — may not be a thing outside of systems, and to be looked for rather in the daily contact of the child's expanding personality with good wholesome personalities around it. Perhaps, after all, the quiet spaciousness of those old colonial days was a fine nursery for men, just as the western forests nurtured Lincoln and many a quiet home to-day is fostering the goodness and greatness of the future.

Stuart's earliest picture is said to be a portrait of Mr. Thomas R. Hunter, of Newport, and we read that when he was thirteen years old he received a commission to paint portraits of Mr. and Mrs. John Bannister. Two years later a Scotch painter, Cosmo Alexander, arrived in Newport and interested himself in the boy's efforts, giving him instruction, and when he returned to Scotland two years afterward, taking him with him. One notes how readily the boy ingratiated himself into the hearts of those with whom he came in contact, a trait that marks each stage of

his subsequent career. He had a quiet, self-contained demeanour, with a store of spirit that could flash out enthusiastically upon occasion and in a very tactful way; with humour, too, and satire as he grew older, and with a growing brusqueness and even intolerance, toward his later life. The urbanity, discreetness, and humour he would have inherited from his Scotch father, drawing from his Welsh ancestry on the mother's side the ardour of his character and his love of music. For his education had included the practice of music — he could play the organ and was skilful on other instruments. He must have been, indeed, a personality of rare graciousness.

The stay in Scotland was short, for Alexander died very soon after their arrival. He had established his ward in the University of Glasgow, and, dying, committed him to the care of Sir George Chambers, who himself died shortly after. The youth pined for home, and managed to get passage back to America on a collier. With a friend named Waterhouse he hired a model to study from, "a strong-muscled blacksmith." It was characteristic of the bent of choice that reappears in his mature work: a love of strength and resolution, delighting in the robust physical qualities or in the strong evidences of mental and moral character which time has impressed upon the face.

In 1775 he again set out for Great Britain, and this time reached London. It was not until he had suffered much privation that he summoned up courage to call upon his countryman, Benjamin West. The great man was entertaining friends and not disposed to be interrupted; but the gentleman who left the party to interview the caller, found him to be a connection of friends of his in Philadelphia, and ushered him into the assemblage. The young man's demeanour pleased West, who invited him to bring his work for inspection, admitted him as a pupil, and in 1777 installed him in his own household. By this time, besides painting under West, with Trumbull among his fellow-students, he was attending the discourses of Sir Joshua and studying anatomy in Dr. Cruikshank's classes at the Academy. His sojourn in West's studio extended over eight years, although during that time he was engaged on some independent work; the Duke of Northumberland, for example, sending for him to Sion House, on the Thames, to paint two portraits. From being the pupil he became the assistant of his master, until the painter Dance advised him to set up a studio of his own, which, with West's approbation, he did in 1785.

His success was immediate; people of wit and fashion thronged his rooms; he "tasked himself

to six sitters a day," then flung his work aside and devoted himself to society, living in great splendour and spending freely. During this period he painted Louis XVI, George III, and the Prince of Wales, subsequently George IV; while among his other sitters were John Kemble, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Benjamin West. He had married Charlotte Coates, daughter of Dr. Coates of Berkshire, and with her moved, in 1788, to Dublin, where he painted many eminent people and was welcomed in society for his personal gifts. But he was eager to paint George Washington.

It is memorable that Stuart, when once his position was assured, indulged himself in the privilege of refusing many sitters. Notwithstanding his enormous expenses and the embarrassments to which they frequently led, he kept his artistic conscience intact from the smudge of mere money-making, and confined himself to those sitters who appealed to his particular temperament and afforded him the best opportunity of making a good picture. So he was willing to throw up all the golden opportunities which Europe presented, that he might have the privilege and satisfaction of painting the one man whose heroic qualities had most fascinated his imagination.

He reached New York in 1792, and two years later proceeded to Philadelphia, where Congress

was in session. Establishing his studio on the southeast corner of Fifth and Chestnut streets, he painted three portraits of Washington from life. The first, which showed the right side of the face, was destroyed by the artist as not being satisfactory, and only three, or perhaps four, copies are known to exist. Then followed the full-length portrait, painted for Lord Lansdowne, which shows the left side of the face and is now in London. The third, against Washington's own desire, was executed at the earnest solicitation of his wife and was left intentionally unfinished. This picture, which shows the *left* side of the face, was purchased from Stuart's widow and presented to the Boston Athenæum. Known as the "Athenæum" head, it now hangs in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and over fifty copies of it by Stuart's hands have been traced.

Unlike Charles Willson Peale, who made, in all, fourteen portraits from life of Washington, and painted him in the prime of his vigour, Stuart depicts the late autumn of his life, when the fruitage of his activity had been gathered in; a face on which the lines of character are softened; the energy of expression mellowed; a face chastened by responsibilities; infinitely sweet and with a tender melancholy of exalted seriousness. It is the face of one who has conquered himself as

well as others; it has the yearning solicitude of a father for his children; it represents him as indeed the Father of his people. The painter Leslie is quoted as having said that it was fortunate that an artist existed in the time of Washington who could hand him down to posterity looking like a gentleman; and, while the remark seems at first sound a trifle flippant, there is much in it, after all. For it is indeed the gentle qualities, those evidences in word and deed of high breeding and elevated mind, the prevailing graciousness and lofty seriousness of the true gentleman, — that *rara avis* among the indiscriminate flock of so-called gentlemen — that must have been preëminently distinguishable in Washington. One feels that, I think, so sensibly in visiting Mount Vernon to-day.

Set upon that fine bluff overlooking the Potomac, it has the dignity of elevation; a certain aloofness above the level, self-centred within its own appanage of outbuildings, gardens and grounds, and yet such a modest dignity, suggesting the sweet amenities, the little graces and quiet refinement of cultured country life. Certainly it is the most completely interesting memorial home of a great man anywhere to be seen, inasmuch as it is pervaded by the flavour of the old times and by the spirit of its former occu-

pant. And the whole association of the place is of the choicest kind of gentle living. Assuredly it was a good thing that there should be an artist of the period who could record these qualities.

Stuart brought to the task a keenly comprehending mind, and a large experience in the acquaintanceship with men of affairs, of wit and learning, and brilliant, varied accomplishments. Himself a man of brilliant parts, he had ceased to be dazzled by brilliance; could look at the individual example of manhood that he was studying in its own separate perspective; could take in the complexities of his character and give a complete, instead of a fragmentary, record. Neither in his whirl of success, we may believe, had he lost touch entirely with the gentle associations that surrounded his early life. There was much in the riot of those times to hurt a sensitive susceptibility, and Stuart so often refused a sitter, or threw up a commission partly executed, that it is not unreasonable to assume that such acts were due in some measure, at least, to a certain preciosity in his own feelings. Certainly no other man of his time could have presented this fine side of Washington. West would have given a grandiloquent rendering of the hero; if not bombastic, probably theatrical; whereas it is the reticence of Stuart's portraits that is so admirable.

"I copy the works of God," he said, "and leave clothes to tailors and mantua makers." Without admitting the general desirableness of such a painter theory, we may acknowledge its value when tested on such a subject as Washington. We are glad to be free of the curtains and columns and all the other stock paraphernalia of the painter of the period, and to be left in uninterrupted possession of the man and nothing but the man.

Such reserve on Stuart's part is the measure of his ranking as an artist. He worked, as he said himself, to express sentiment, grace, and character. In Washington he found all three; with many of his sitters he was less fortunate. Consequently, he is not a painter of great pictures, but of some great portraits. Yet the limitation is in a way an evidence of greatness. It was the fashion of his time to try and paint great pictures. From this he had the hardihood to separate himself, reaching with a true originality of feeling after what really interested him, the big essentials in the subjects that he studied. Thus he put himself in line with the great painters, shaking himself free of the fads and nostrums of his time, and betaking himself straight to nature. In the story of American art he holds a unique and dignified position.

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